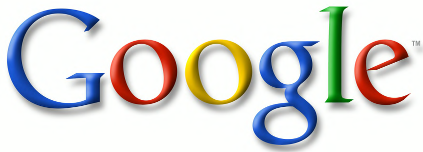

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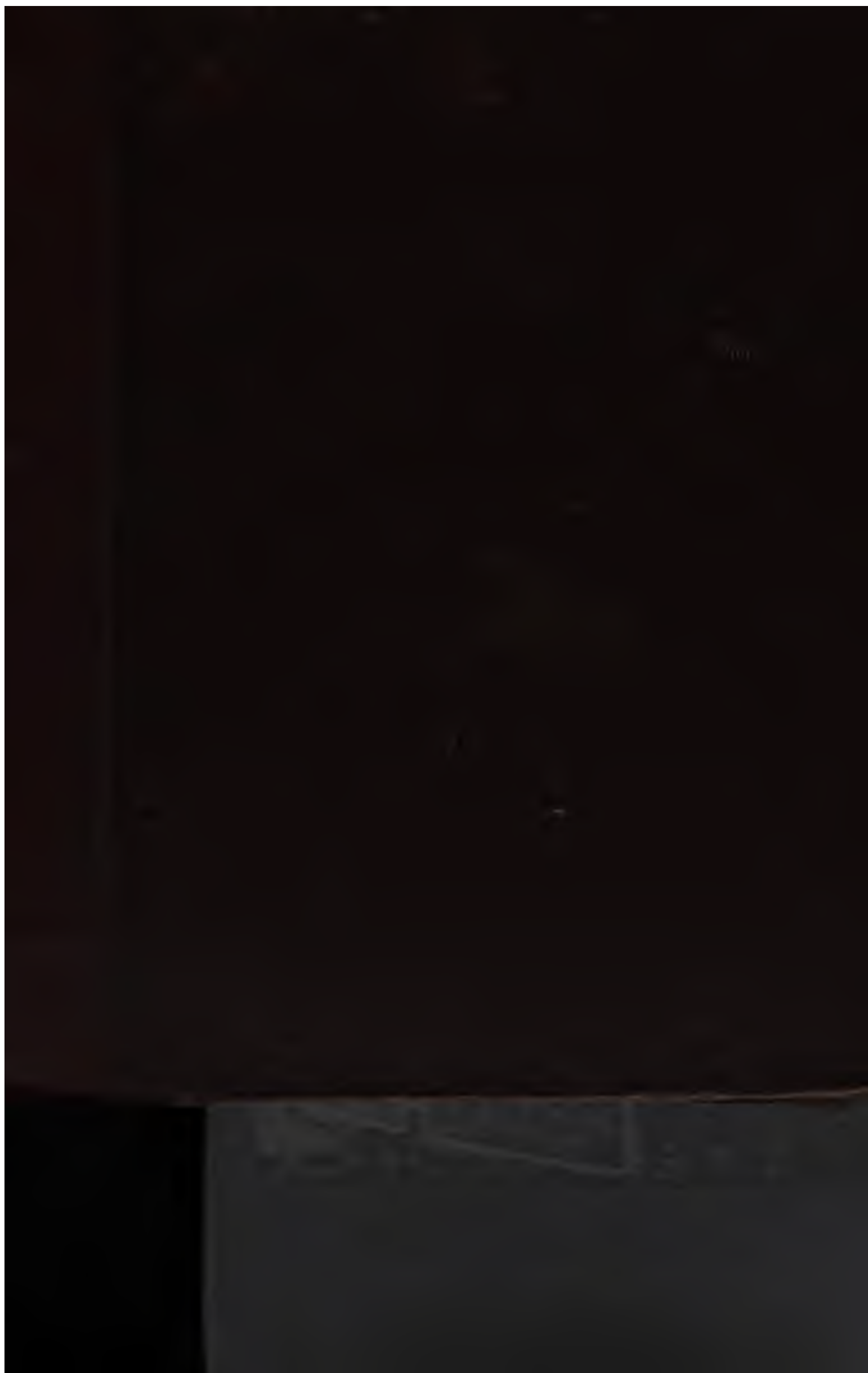

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STORIES REVIVED

STORIES REVIVED

IN THREE VOLUMES

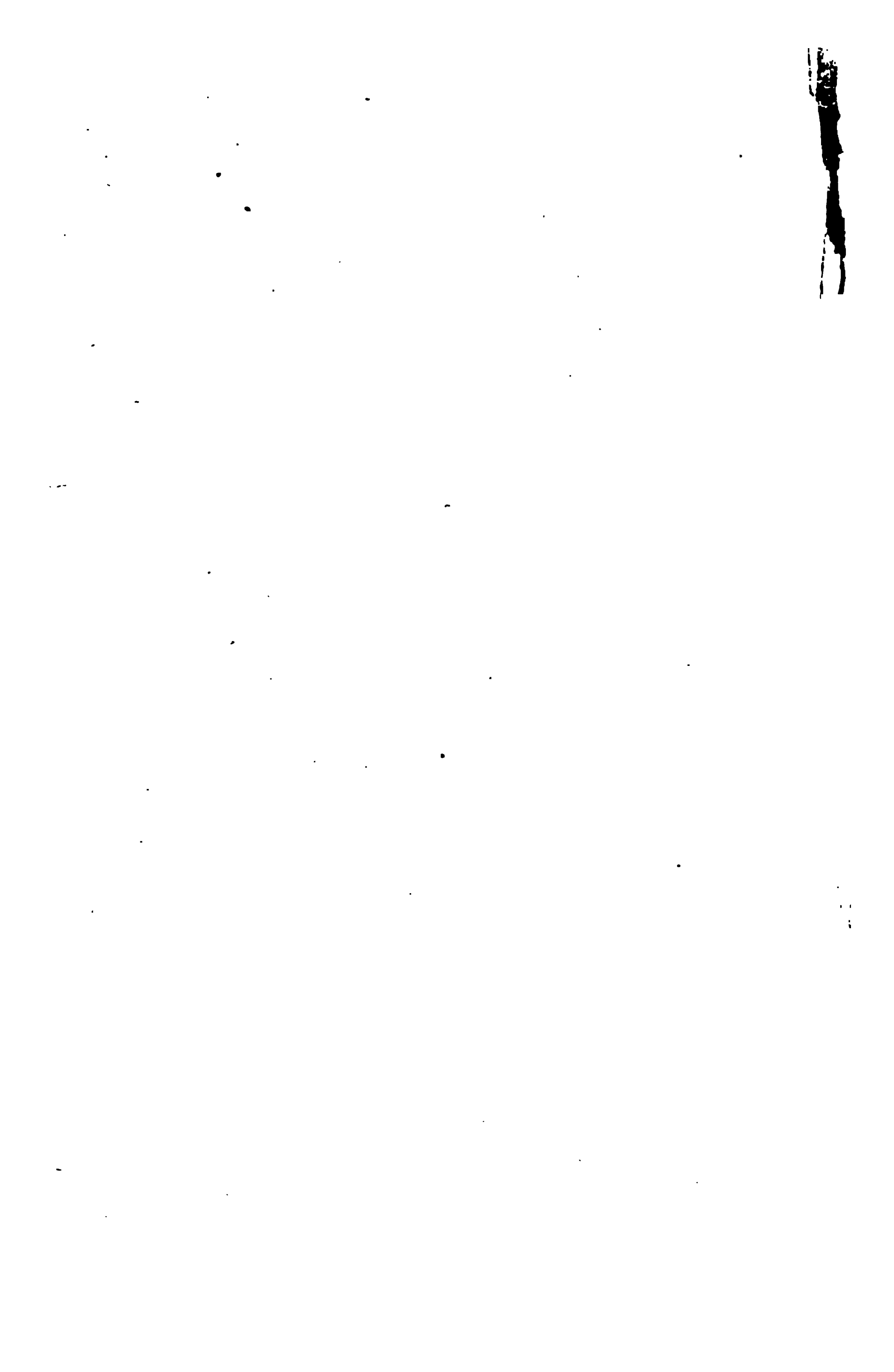
VOL. I.

THE AUTHOR OF 'BELTRAFFIO.' PANDORA.
THE PATH OF DUTY.
A DAY OF DAYS. A LIGHT MAN.

BY

HENRY JAMES

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1885



NOTICE.

As the date of the original publication (for the most part in American magazines) is attached to each of the Tales comprised in these volumes, the reader will see that the greater number appeared for the first time many years ago—that the oldest, indeed, are of an almost venerable age; but it is proper to add that these earlier stories have been in every case minutely revised and corrected—many passages being wholly rewritten. In the matter of revision, in short, they have been very freely handled; some of the proper names have been altered, and in one instance the title of the story. The first and third Tales in the first volume are the only ones first presented in an English periodical (*The English Illustrated Magazine*), all the others (the latest of which is of 1878) saw the light on the other side of the Atlantic. It had come to the writer's knowledge that they were being to some extent "hunted up," and there seemed to be good reasons for anticipating further research by re-introducing them. He is confident that they have gained, not lost, freshness by the process of retouching to which they have been subjected.

February 1885.

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STORIES REVIVED.

THE AUTHOR OF "BELTRAFFIO."

I.

MUCH as I wished to see him, I had kept my letter of introduction for three weeks in my pocket-book. I was nervous and timid about meeting him—conscious of youth and ignorance, convinced that he was tormented by strangers, and especially by my country-people, and not exempt from the suspicion that he had the irritability as well as the brilliancy of genius. Moreover, the pleasure, if it should occur (for I could scarcely believe it was really at hand), would be so great that I wished to think of it in advance, to feel that it was in my pocket, not to mix it with satisfactions more superficial and usual. In the little game of new sensations that I was playing with my ingenuous mind, I wished to keep my visit to the author of *Beltraffio* as a trump-card. It was three years after the publication of that fascinating work, which I had read over five times, and which now, with my riper judgment, I admire on the whole as much as ever. This will give you about

the date of my first visit (of any duration) to England; for you will not have forgotten the commotion—I may even say the scandal—produced by Mark Ambient's masterpiece. It was the most complete presentation that had yet been made of the gospel of art; it was a kind of æsthetic war-cry. People had endeavoured to sail nearer to "truth" in the cut of their sleeves and the shape of their sideboards; but there had not as yet been, among English novels, such an example of beauty of execution and value of subject. Nothing had been done in that line from the point of view of art for art. This was my own point of view, I may mention, when I was twenty-five; whether it is altered now I won't take upon myself to say—especially as the discerning reader will be able to judge for himself. I had been in England a twelvemonth before the time to which I began by alluding, and had learned then that Mr. Ambient was in distant lands—was making a considerable tour in the East. So there was nothing to do but to keep my letter till I should be in London again. It was of little use to me to hear that his wife had not left England and, with her little boy, their only child, was spending the period of her husband's absence—a good many months—at a small place they had down in Surrey. They had a house in London which was let. All this I learned, and also that Mrs. Ambient was charming (my friend, the American poet, from whom I had my introduction, had never seen her, his relations with the great man being only epistolary); but

she was not, after all, though she had lived so near the rose, the author of *Beltraffio*, and I did not go down into Surrey to call on her. I went to the Continent, spent the following winter in Italy, and returned to London in May. My visit to Italy opened my eyes to a good many things, but to nothing more than the beauty of certain pages in the works of Mark Ambient. I had every one of his productions in my portmanteau—they are not, as you know, very numerous, but he had preluded to *Beltraffio* by some exquisite things—and I used to read them over in the evening at the inn. I used to say to myself that the man who drew those characters and wrote that style understood what he saw and knew what he was doing. This is my only reason for mentioning my winter in Italy. He had been there much in former years, and he was saturated with what painters call the "feeling" of that classic land. He expressed the charm of the old hill-cities of Tuscany, the look of certain lonely grass-grown places which, in the past, had echoed with life; he understood the great artists, he understood the spirit of the Renaissance, he understood everything. The scene of one of his earlier novels was laid in Rome, the scene of another in Florence, and I moved through these cities in company with the figures whom Mark Ambient had set so firmly upon their feet. This is why I was now so much happier even than before in the prospect of making his acquaintance.

At last, when I had dallied with this privilege long enough, I despatched to him the missive of

the American poet. He had already gone out of town; he shrank from the rigour of the London season, and it was his habit to migrate on the first of June. Moreover, I had heard that this year he was hard at work on a new book, into which some of his impressions of the East were to be wrought, so that he desired nothing so much as quiet days. This knowledge, however, did not prevent me—*cet âge est sans pitié*—from sending with my friend's letter a note of my own, in which I asked Mr. Ambient's leave to come down and see him for an hour or two, on a day to be designated by himself. My proposal was accompanied with a very frank expression of my sentiments, and the effect of the whole projectile was to elicit from the great man the kindest possible invitation. He would be delighted to see me, especially if I should turn up on the following Saturday and could remain till the Monday morning. We would take a walk over the Surrey commons, and I should tell him all about the other great man, the one in America. He indicated to me the best train, and it may be imagined whether on the Saturday afternoon I was punctual at Waterloo. He carried his benevolence to the point of coming to meet me at the little station at which I was to alight, and my heart beat very fast as I saw his handsome face, surmounted with a soft wide-awake, and which I knew by a photograph long since enshrined upon my mantel-shelf, scanning the carriage-windows as the train rolled up. He recognised me as infallibly as I had recognised him; he appeared to know by instinct

how a young American of an æsthetic turn would look when much divided between eagerness and modesty. He took me by the hand, and smiled at me, and said, "You must be—a—*you*, I think!" and asked if I should mind going on foot to his house, which would take but a few minutes. I remember thinking it a piece of extraordinary affability that he should give directions about the conveyance of my bag, and feeling altogether very happy and rosy, in fact quite transported, when he laid his hand on my shoulder as we came out of the station. I surveyed him, askance, as we walked together; I had already—I had indeed instantly—seen that he was a delightful creature. His face is so well known that I needn't describe it; he looked to me at once an English gentleman and a man of genius, and I thought that a happy combination. There was just a little of the Bohemian in his appearance; you would easily have guessed that he belonged to the guild of artists and men of letters. He was addicted to velvet jackets, to cigarettes, to loose shirt-collars, to looking a little dishevelled. His features, which were fine but not perfectly regular, are fairly enough represented in his portraits; but no portrait that I have seen gives any idea of his expression. There were so many things in it, and they chased each other in and out of his face. I have seen people who were grave and gay in quick alternation; but Mark Ambient was grave and gay at one and the same moment. There were other strange oppositions and contradictions in his slightly faded and fatigued countenance.

He seemed both young and old, both anxious and indifferent. He had evidently had an active past, which inspired one with curiosity, and yet it was impossible not to be more curious still about his future. He was just enough above middle height to be spoken of as tall, and rather lean and long in the flank. He had the friendliest, frankest manner possible, and yet I could see that he was shy. He was thirty-eight years old at the time *Beltraffio* was published. He asked me about his friend in America, about the length of my stay in England, about the last news in London and the people I had seen there; and I remember looking for the signs of genius in the very form of his questions—and thinking I found it. I liked his voice. There was genius in his house, too, I thought, when we got there; there was imagination in the carpets and curtains, in the pictures and books, in the garden behind it, where certain old brown walls were muffled in creepers that appeared to me to have been copied from a masterpiece of one of the pre-Raphaelites. That was the way many things struck me at that time, in England; as if they were reproductions of something that existed primarily in art or literature. It was not the picture, the poem, the fictive page, that seemed to me a copy; these things were the originals, and the life of happy and distinguished people was fashioned in their image. Mark Ambient called his house a cottage, and I perceived afterwards that he was right; for if it had not been a cottage it must have been a villa, and a villa, in England at least, was not a

place in which one could fancy him at home. But it was, to my vision, a cottage glorified and translated; it was a palace of art, on a slightly reduced scale—it was an old English demesne. It nestled under a cluster of magnificent beeches, it had little creaking lattices that opened out of, or into, pendent mats of ivy, and gables, and old red tiles, as well as a general aspect of being painted in water-colours and inhabited by people whose lives would go on in chapters and volumes. The lawn seemed to me of extraordinary extent, the garden-walls of incalculable height, the whole air of the place delightfully still, and private, and proper to itself. "My wife must be somewhere about," Mark Ambient said, as we went in. "We shall find her perhaps; we have got about an hour before dinner. She may be in the garden. I will show you my little place."

We passed through the house, and into the grounds, as I should have called them, which extended into the rear. They covered but three or four acres, but, like the house, they were very old and crooked, and full of traces of long habitation, with inequalities of level and little steps—mossy and cracked were these—which connected the different parts with each other. The limits of the place, cleverly dissimulated, were muffled in the deepest verdure. They made, as I remember, a kind of curtain at the farther end, in one of the folds of which, as it were, we presently perceived, from afar, a little group. "Ah, there she is!" said Mark Ambient; "and she has got the boy." He made this last remark in a tone slightly dif-

ferent from any in which he yet had spoken. I was not fully aware of it at the time, but it lingered in my ear and I afterwards understood it.

"Is it your son?" I inquired, feeling the question not to be brilliant.

"Yes, my only child. He is always in his mother's pocket. She coddles him too much." It came back to me afterwards, too—the manner in which he spoke these words. They were not petulant; they expressed rather a sudden coldness, a kind of mechanical submission. We went a few steps further, and then he stopped short, and called the boy, beckoning to him repeatedly.

"Dolcino, come and see your daddy!" There was something in the way he stood still and waited that made me think he did it for a purpose. Mrs. Ambient had her arm round the child's waist, and he was leaning against her knee; but though he looked up at the sound of his father's voice, she gave no sign of releasing him. A lady, apparently a neighbour, was seated near her, and before them was a garden-table, on which a tea-service had been placed.

Mark Ambient called again, and Dolcino struggled in the maternal embrace, but he was too tightly held, and after two or three fruitless efforts he suddenly turned round and buried his head deep in his mother's lap. There was a certain awkwardness in the scene; I thought it rather odd that Mrs. Ambient should pay so little attention to her husband. But I would not for the world have betrayed my thought, and, to conceal it, I observed that it must be such a pleasant thing to

have tea in the garden. "Ah, she won't let him come!" said Mark Ambient, with a sigh; and we went our way till we reached the two ladies. He mentioned my name to his wife, and I noticed that he addressed her as "My dear," very genially, without any trace of resentment at her detention of the child. The quickness of the transition made me vaguely ask myself whether he were henpecked — a shocking conjecture, which I instantly dismissed. Mrs. Ambient was quite such a wife as I should have expected him to have; slim and fair, with a long neck and pretty eyes and an air of great refinement. She was a little cold, and a little shy; but she was very sweet, and she had a certain look of race, justified by my afterwards learning that she was "connected" with two or three great families. I have seen poets married to women of whom it was difficult to conceive that they should gratify the poetic fancy — women with dull faces and glutinous minds, who were none the less, however, excellent wives. But there was no obvious incongruity in Mark Ambient's union. Mrs. Ambient, delicate and quiet, in a white dress, with her beautiful child at her side, was worthy of the author of a work so distinguished as *Beltraffio*. Round her neck she wore a black velvet ribbon, of which the long ends, tied behind, hung down her back, and to which, in front, was attached a miniature portrait of her little boy. Her smooth, shining hair was confined in a net. She gave me a very pleasant greeting, and Dolcino—I thought this little name of endearment delightful—took advantage of her

getting up to slip away from her and go to his father, who said nothing to him, but simply seized him and held him high in his arms for a moment, kissing him several times. I had lost no time in observing that the child, who was not more than seven years old, was extraordinarily beautiful. He had the face of an angel—the eyes, the hair, the more than mortal bloom, the smile of innocence. There was something touching, almost alarming, in his beauty, which seemed to be composed of elements too fine and pure for the breath of this world. When I spoke to him, and he came and held out his hand and smiled at me, I felt a sudden pity for him, as if he had been an orphan, or a changeling, or stamped with some social stigma. It was impossible to be, in fact, more exempt from these misfortunes, and yet, as one kissed him, it was hard to keep from murmuring "Poor little devil!" though why one should have applied this epithet to a living cherub is more than I can say. Afterwards, indeed, I knew a little better; I simply discovered that he was too charming to live, wondering at the same time that his parents should not have perceived it, and should not be in proportionate grief and despair. For myself, I had no doubt of his evanescence, having already noticed that there is a kind of charm which is like a death-warrant. The lady who had been sitting with Mrs. Ambient was a jolly, ruddy personage, dressed in velveteen and rather limp feathers, whom I guessed to be the vicar's wife—our hostess did not introduce me—and who immediately began to talk to Ambient

about chrysanthemums. This was a safe subject, and yet there was a certain surprise for me in seeing the author of *Beltraffio* even in such superficial communion with the Church of England. His writings implied so much detachment from that institution, expressed a view of life so profane, as it were, so independent, and so little likely, in general, to be thought edifying, that I should have expected to find him an object of horror to vicars and their ladies—of horror repaid on his own part by good-natured but brilliant mockery. This proves how little I knew as yet of the English people and their extraordinary talent for keeping up their forms, as well as of some of the mysteries of Mark Ambient's hearth and home. I found afterwards that he had, in his study, between smiles and cigar-smoke, some wonderful comparisons for his clerical neighbours; but meanwhile the chrysanthemums were a source of harmony, for he and the vicaress were equally fond of them, and I was surprised at the knowledge they exhibited of this interesting plant. The lady's visit, however, had presumably already been long, and she presently got up, saying she must go, and kissed Mrs. Ambient. Mark started to walk with her to the gate of the grounds, holding Dolcino by the hand.

"Stay with me, my darling," Mrs. Ambient said to the boy, who was wandering away with his father.

Mark Ambient paid no attention to the summons, but Dolcino turned round and looked with eyes of shy entreaty at his mother. "Can't I go with papa?"

"Not when I ask you to stay with me."

"But please don't ask me, mamma," said the child, in his little clear, new voice.

"I must ask you when I want you. Come to me, my darling." And Mrs. Ambient, who had seated herself again, held out her long, slender hands.

Her husband stopped, with his back turned to her, but without releasing the child. He was still talking to the vicaress, but this good lady, I think, had lost the thread of her attention. She looked at Mrs. Ambient and at Dolcino, and then she looked at me, smiling very hard, in an extremely fixed, cheerful manner.

"Papa," said the child, "mamma wants me not to go with you."

"He's very tired—he has run about all day. He ought to be quiet till he goes to bed. Otherwise he won't sleep." These declarations fell successively and gravely from Mrs. Ambient's lips.

Her husband, still without turning round, bent over the boy and looked at him in silence. The vicaress gave a genial, irrelevant laugh, and observed that he was a precious little pet. "Let him choose," said Mark Ambient. "My dear little boy, will you go with me or will you stay with your mother?"

"Oh, it's a shame!" cried the vicar's lady, with increased hilarity.

"Papa, I don't think I can choose," the child answered, making his voice very low and confidential. "But I have been a great deal with mamma to-day," he added in a moment.

"And very little with papa! My dear fellow,

I think you have chosen!" And Mark Ambient walked off with his son, accompanied by re-echoing but inarticulate comments from my fellow-visitor.

His wife had seated herself again, and her fixed eyes, bent upon the ground, expressed for a few moments so much mute agitation that I felt as if almost any remark from my own lips would be a false note. But Mrs. Ambient quickly recovered herself, and said to me civilly enough that she hoped I didn't mind having had to walk from the station. I reassured her on this point, and she went on, "We have got a thing that might have gone for you, but my husband wouldn't order it."

"That gave me the pleasure of a walk with him," I rejoined.

She was silent a minute, and then she said, "I believe the Americans walk very little."

"Yes, we always run," I answered, laughingly.

She looked at me seriously, and I began to perceive a certain coldness in her pretty eyes. "I suppose your distances are so great."

"Yes; but we break our marches! I can't tell you what a pleasure it is for me to find myself here," I added. "I have the greatest admiration for Mr. Ambient."

"He will like that. He likes being admired."

"He must have a very happy life, then. He has many worshippers."

"Oh yes, I have seen some of them," said Mrs. Ambient, looking away, very far from me, rather as if such a vision were before her at the moment. Something in her tone seemed to indicate that the vision was scarcely edifying, and I guessed very

quickly that she was not in sympathy with the author of *Beltraffio.* I thought the fact strange, but, somehow, in the glow of my own enthusiasm, I didn't think it important; it only made me wish to be rather explicit about that enthusiasm.

"For me, you know," I remarked, "he is quite the greatest of living writers."

"Of course I can't judge. Of course he's very clever," said Mrs. Ambient, smiling a little.

"He's magnificent, Mrs. Ambient! There are pages in each of his books that have a perfection that classes them with the greatest things. Therefore, for me to see him in this familiar way—in his habit as he lives—and to find, apparently, the man as delightful as the artist, I can't tell you how much too good to be true it seems, and how great a privilege I think it." I knew that I was gushing, but I couldn't help it, and what I said was a good deal less than what I felt. I was by no means sure that I should dare to say even so much as this to Ambient himself, and there was a kind of rapture in speaking it out to his wife, which was not affected by the fact that, as a wife, she appeared peculiar. She listened to me with her face grave again, and with her lips a little compressed, as if there were no doubt, of course, that her husband was remarkable, but at the same time she had heard all this before and couldn't be expected to be particularly interested in it. There was even in her manner an intimation that I was rather young, and that people usually got over that sort of thing. "I assure you that for me this is a red-letter day," I added.

She made no response, until after a pause, looking round her, she said abruptly, though gently, "We are very much afraid about the fruit this year."

My eyes wandered to the mossy, mottled, garden-walls, where plum-trees and pear-trees, flattened and fastened upon the rusty bricks, looked like crucified figures with many arms. "Doesn't it promise well?" I inquired.

"No, the trees look very dull. We had such late frosts."

Then there was another pause. Mrs. Ambient kept her eyes fixed on the opposite end of the grounds, as if she were watching for her husband's return with the child. "Is Mr. Ambient fond of gardening?" it occurred to me to inquire, irresistibly impelled as I felt myself, moreover, to bring the conversation constantly back to him.

"He is very fond of plums," said his wife.

"Ah, well then, I hope your crop will be better than you fear. It's a lovely old place," I continued. "The whole character of it is that of certain places that he describes. Your house is like one of his pictures."

"It's a pleasant little place. There are hundreds like it."

"Oh, it has got his tone," I said laughing, and insisting on my point the more that Mrs. Ambient appeared to see in my appreciation of her simple establishment a sign of limited experience.

It was evident that I insisted too much. "His tone?" she repeated, with a quick look at me and a slightly heightened colour.

"Surely he has a tone, Mrs. Ambient."

"Oh yes, he has indeed! But I don't in the least consider that I am living in one of his books; I shouldn't care for that, at all," she went on, with a smile which had in some degree the effect of converting my slightly sharp protest into a joke deficient in point. "I am afraid I am not very literary," said Mrs. Ambient. "And I am not artistic."

"I am very sure you are not stupid nor *bornée*," I ventured to reply, with the accompaniment of feeling immediately afterwards that I had been both familiar and patronising. My only consolation was in the reflection that it was she, and not I, who had begun it. She had brought her idiosyncrasies into the discussion.

"Well, whatever I am, I am very different from my husband. If you like him, you won't like me. You needn't say anything. Your liking me isn't in the least necessary."

"Don't defy me!" I exclaimed.

She looked as if she had not heard me, which was the best thing she could do; and we sat some time without further speech. Mrs. Ambient had evidently the enviable English quality of being able to be silent without being restless. But at last she spoke; she asked me if there seemed to be many people in town. I gave her what satisfaction I could on this point, and we talked a little about London and of some pictures it presented at that time of the year. At the end of this I came back, irrepressibly, to Mark Ambient.

"Doesn't he like to be there now? I suppose

he doesn't find the proper quiet for his work. I should think his things had been written, for the most part, in a very still place. They suggest a great stillness, following on a kind of tumult—don't you think so? I suppose London is a tremendous place to collect impressions, but a refuge like this, in the country, must be much better for working them up. Does he get many of his impressions in London, do you think?" I proceeded from point to point, in this malign inquiry, simply because my hostess, who probably thought me a very pushing and talkative young man, gave me time; for when I paused—I have not represented my pauses—she simply continued to let her eyes wander, and, with her long fair fingers, played with the medallion on her neck. When I stopped altogether, however, she was obliged to say something, and what she said was that she had not the least idea where her husband got his impressions. This made me think her, for a moment, positively disagreeable; delicate and proper and rather aristocratically dry as she sat there. But I must either have lost the impression a moment later, or been goaded by it to further aggression, for I remember asking her whether Mr. Ambient was in a good vein of work, and when we might look for the appearance of the book on which he was engaged. I have every reason now to know that she thought me an odious person.

She gave a strange, small laugh as she said, "I'm afraid you think I know a great deal more about my husband's work than I do. I haven't

the least idea what he is doing," she added presently, in a slightly different, that is, a more explanatory, tone; as if she recognised in some degree the enormity of her confession. "I don't read what he writes!"

She did not succeed (and would not, even had she tried much harder) in making it seem to me anything less than monstrous. I stared at her, and I think I blushed. "Don't you admire his genius? Don't you admire *Beltraffio?*"

She hesitated a moment, and I wondered what she could possibly say. She did not speak—I could see—the first words that rose to her lips; she repeated what she had said a few minutes before. "Oh, of course he's very clever!" And with this she got up; her husband and little boy had reappeared. Mrs. Ambient left me and went to meet them; she stopped and had a few words with her husband, which I did not hear, and which ended in her taking the child by the hand and returning to the house with him. Her husband joined me in a moment, looking, I thought, the least bit conscious and constrained, and said that if I would come in with him he would show me my room. In looking back upon these first moments of my visit to him, I find it important to avoid the error of appearing to have understood his situation from the first, and to have seen in him the signs of things which I learnt only afterwards. This later knowledge throws a backward light, and makes me forget that at least on the occasion of which I am speaking now (I mean that first afternoon), Mark Ambient struck me as a fortu-

nate man. Allowing for this, I think he was rather silent and irresponsive as we walked back to the house—though I remember well the answer he made to a remark of mine in relation to his child.

"That's an extraordinary little boy of yours," I said. "I have never seen such a child."

"Why do you call him extraordinary?"

"He's so beautiful—so fascinating. He's like a little work of art."

He turned quickly, grasping my arm an instant. "Oh, don't call him that, or you'll—you'll——!" And in his hesitation he broke off, suddenly, laughing at my surprise. But immediately afterwards he added, "You will make his little future very difficult."

I declared that I wouldn't for the world take any liberties with his little future—it seemed to me to hang by threads of such delicacy. I should only be highly interested in watching it. "You Americans are very sharp," said Ambient. "You notice more things than we do."

"Ah, if you want visitors who are not struck with you, you shouldn't ask me down here!"

He showed me my room, a little bower of chintz, with open windows where the light was green, and before he left me he said irrelevantly, "As for my little boy, you know, we shall probably kill him between us, before we have done with him!" And he made this assertion as if he really believed it, without any appearance of jest, with his fine, near-sighted, expressive eyes looking straight into mine.

"Do you mean by spoiling him?"

"No—by fighting for him!"

"You had better give him to me to keep for you," I said. "Let me remove the apple of discord."

I laughed, of course, but he had the air of being perfectly serious. "It would be quite the best thing we could do. I should be quite ready to do it."

"I am greatly obliged to you for your confidence."

Mark Ambient lingered there, with his hands in his pockets. I felt, within a few moments, as if I had, morally speaking, taken several steps nearer to him. He looked weary, just as he faced me then, looked preoccupied, and as if there were something one might do for him. I was terribly conscious of the limits of my own ability, but I wondered what such a service might be—feeling at bottom, however, that the only thing I could do for him was to like him. I suppose he guessed this, and was grateful for what was in my mind; for he went on presently, "I haven't the advantage of being an American. But I also notice a little, and I have an idea that—a——" here he smiled and laid his hand on my shoulder, "that even apart from your nationality, you are not destitute of intelligence! I have only known you half an hour, but—a——" And here he hesitated again. "You are very young, after all."

"But you may treat me as if I could understand you!" I said; and before he left me to dress for dinner he had virtually given me a promise that he would.

When I went down into the drawing-room—I was very punctual—I found that neither my hostess nor my host had appeared. A lady rose from a sofa, however, and inclined her head as I rather surprisedly gazed at her. "I dare say you don't know me," she said, with a modern laugh. "I am Mark Ambient's sister." Whereupon I shook hands with her—saluting her very low. Her laugh was modern—by which I mean that it consisted of the vocal agitation which, between people who meet in drawing-rooms, serves as the solvent of social mysteries, the medium of transitions; but her appearance was—what shall I call it?—mediæval. She was pale and angular, with a long, thin face, inhabited by sad, dark eyes, and black hair intertwined with golden fillets and curious chains. She wore a faded velvet robe, which clung to her when she moved, fashioned, as to the neck and sleeves, like the garments of old Venetians and Florentines. She looked pictorial and melancholy, and was so perfect an image of a type which I—in my ignorance—supposed to be extinct, that while she rose before me I was almost as much startled as if I had seen a ghost. I afterwards perceived that Miss Ambient was not incapable of deriving pleasure from the effect she produced, and I think this sentiment had something to do with her sinking again into her seat, with her long, lean, but not ungraceful arms locked together in an archaic manner on her knees, and her mournful eyes addressing themselves to me with an intentness which was an earnest of what they were destined subsequently to inflict

upon me. She was a singular, self-conscious, artificial creature, and I never, subsequently, more than half penetrated her motives and mysteries. Of one thing I am sure, however: that they were considerably less extraordinary than her appearance announced. Miss Ambient was a restless, yearning spinster, consumed with the love of Michael-Angelesque attitudes and mystical robes; but I am pretty sure she had not in her nature those depths of unutterable thought which, when you first knew her, seemed to look out from her eyes and to prompt her complicated gestures. Those features, in especial, had a misleading eloquence; they rested upon you with a far-off dimness, an air of obstructed sympathy, which was certainly not always a key to the spirit of their owner; and I suspect that a young lady could not really have been so dejected and disillusioned as Miss Ambient looked, without having committed a crime for which she was consumed with remorse or parted with a hope which she could not sanely have entertained. She had, I believe, the usual allowance of vulgar impulses; she wished to be looked at, she wished to be married, she wished to be thought original. It costs me something to speak in this irreverent manner of Mark Ambient's sister, but I shall have still more disagreeable things to say before I have finished my little anecdote, and moreover—I confess it—I owe the young lady a sort of grudge. Putting aside the curious cast of her face, she had no natural aptitude for an artistic development—she had little real intelligence. But her affectations rubbed off on her brother's

renown, and as there were plenty of people who disapproved of him totally, they could easily point to his sister as a person formed by his influence. It was quite possible to regard her as a warning, and she had done him but little good with the world at large. He was the original, and she was the inevitable imitation. I think he was scarcely aware of the impression she produced—beyond having a general idea that she made up very well as a Rossetti; he was used to her, and he was sorry for her—wishing she would marry and observing that she didn't. Doubtless I take her too seriously, for she did me no harm—though I am bound to add that I feel I can only half account for her. She was not so mystical as she looked, but she was a strange, indirect, uncomfortable, embarrassing woman. My story will give the reader at best so very small a knot to untie that I need not hope to excite his curiosity by delaying to remark that Mrs. Ambient hated her sister-in-law. This I only found out afterwards, when I found out some other things. But I mention it at once, for I shall perhaps not seem to count too much on having enlisted the imagination of the reader if I say that he will already have guessed it. Mrs. Ambient was a person of conscience, and she endeavoured to behave properly to her kinswoman, who spent a month with her twice a year; but it required no great insight to discover that the two ladies were made of a very different paste, and that the usual feminine hypocrisies must have cost them, on either side, much more than the usual effort. Mrs. Ambient,

smooth-haired, thin-lipped, perpetually fresh, must have regarded her crumpled and dishevelled visitor as a very stale joke ; she herself was not a Rossetti, but a Gainsborough or a Lawrence, and she had in her appearance no elements more romantic than a cold, ladylike candour, and a well-starched muslin dress. It was in a garment, and with an expression, of this kind, that she made her entrance, after I had exchanged a few words with Miss Ambient. Her husband presently followed her, and there being no other company we went to dinner. The impression I received from that repast is present to me still. There were elements of oddity in my companions, but they were vague and latent, and didn't interfere with my delight. It came mainly, of course, from Ambient's talk, which was the most brilliant and interesting I had ever heard. I know not whether he laid himself out to dazzle a rather juvenile pilgrim from over the sea ; but it matters little, for it was very easy for him to shine. He was almost better as a talker than as a writer ; that is, if the extraordinary finish of his written prose be really, as some people have maintained, a fault. There was such a kindness in him, however, that I have no doubt it gave him ideas to see me sit open-mouthed, as I suppose I did. Not so the two ladies, who not only were very nearly dumb from beginning to the end of the meal, but who had not the air of being struck with such an exhibition of wit and knowledge. Mrs. Ambient, placid and detached, met neither my eye nor her husband's ; she attended to her dinner, watched the servants, arranged the puckers in her dress,

exchanged at wide intervals a remark with her sister-in-law, and while she slowly rubbed her white hands, between the courses, looked out of the window at the first signs of twilight—the long June day allowing us to dine without candles. Miss Ambient appeared to give little direct heed to her brother's discourse ; but, on the other hand, she was much engaged in watching its effect upon me. Her lustreless pupils continued to attach themselves to my countenance, and it was only her air of belonging to another century that kept them from being importunate. She seemed to look at me across the ages, and the interval of time diminished the realism of the performance. It was as if she knew in a general way that her brother must be talking very well, but she herself was so rich in ideas that she had no need to pick them up, and was at liberty to see what would become of a young American when subjected to a high æsthetic temperature. The temperature was æsthetic, certainly, but it was less so than I could have desired, for I was unsuccessful in certain little attempts to make Mark Ambient talk about himself. I tried to put him on the ground of his own writings, but he slipped through my fingers every time and shifted the saddle to one of his contemporaries. He talked about Balzac and Browning, and what was being done in foreign countries, and about his recent tour in the East, and the extraordinary forms of life that one saw in that part of the world. I perceived that he had reasons for not wishing to descant upon literature, and suffered him without protest to

deliver himself on certain social topics, which he treated with extraordinary humour and with constant revelations of that power of ironical portraiture of which his books are full. He had a great deal to say about London, as London appears to the observer who doesn't fear the accusation of cynicism, during the high-pressure time—from April to July—of its peculiarities. He flashed his faculty of making the fanciful real and the real fanciful over the perfunctory pleasures and desperate exertions of so many of his compatriots, among whom there were evidently not a few types for which he had little love. London bored him, and he made capital sport of it; his only allusion, that I can remember, to his own work was his saying that he meant some day to write an immense grotesque epic of London society. Miss Ambient's perpetual gaze seemed to say to me, "Do you perceive how artistic we are? frankly now, is it possible to be more artistic than this? You surely won't deny that we are remarkable." I was irritated by her use of the plural pronoun, for she had no right to pair herself with her brother; and moreover, of course, I could not see my way to include Mrs. Ambient. But there was no doubt that (for that matter) they were all remarkable, and, with all allowances, I had never heard anything so artistic. Mark Ambient's conversation seemed to play over the whole field of knowledge and taste; it made me feel that this at last was real talk, that this was distinction, culture, experience.

After the ladies had left us he took me into his

study, to smoke, and here I led him on to gossip freely enough about himself. I was bent upon proving to him that I was worthy to listen to him, upon repaying him (for what he had said to me before dinner) by showing him how perfectly I understood. He liked to talk, he liked to defend his ideas (not that I attacked them), he liked a little perhaps—it was a pardonable weakness—to astonish the youthful mind and to feel its admiration and sympathy. I confess that my own youthful mind was considerably astonished at some of his speeches; he startled me and he made me wince. He could not help forgetting, or rather he couldn't know, how little personal contact I had had with the school in which he was master; and he promoted me at a jump, as it were, to the study of its innermost mysteries. My trepidations, however, were delightful; they were just what I had hoped for, and their only fault was that they passed away too quickly, for I found that, as regards most things, I very soon seized Mark Ambient's point of view. It was the point of view of the artist to whom every manifestation of human energy was a thrilling spectacle, and who felt for ever the desire to resolve his experience of life into a literary form. On this matter of the passion for form—the attempt at perfection, the quest for which was to his mind the real search for the holy grail, he said the most interesting, the most inspiring things. He mixed with them a thousand illustrations from his own life, from other lives that he had known, from history and fiction, and, above all, from the annals of the time that was

dear to him beyond all periods—the Italian *cinque-cento.* I saw that in his books he had only said half of his thought, and what he had kept back—from motives that I deplored when I learnt them later—was the richer part. It was his fortune to shock a great many people, but there was not a grain of bravado in his pages (I have always maintained it, though often contradicted), and at bottom the poor fellow, an artist to his finger-tips, and regarding a failure of completeness as a crime, had an extreme dread of scandal. There are people who regret that having gone so far he did not go further; but I regret nothing (putting aside two or three of the motives I just mentioned), for he arrived at perfection, and I don't see how you can go beyond that. The hours I spent in his study—this first one and the few that followed it; they were not, after all, so numerous—seem to glow, as I look back on them, with a tone which is partly that of the brown old room, rich, under the shaded candlelight where we sat and smoked, with the dusky, delicate bindings of valuable books; partly that of his voice, of which I still catch the echo, charged with the images that came at his command. When we went back to the drawing-room we found Miss Ambient alone in possession of it; and she informed us that her sister-in-law had a quarter of an hour before been called by the nurse to see Dolcino, who appeared to be a little feverish.

"Feverish! how in the world does he come to be feverish?" Ambient asked. "He was perfectly well this afternoon."

"Beatrice says you walked him about too much—you almost killed him."

"Beatrice must be very happy—she has an opportunity to triumph!" Mark Ambient said, with a laugh of which the bitterness was just perceptible.

"Surely not if the child is ill," I ventured to remark, by way of pleading for Mrs. Ambient.

"My dear fellow, you are not married—you don't know the nature of wives!" my host exclaimed.

"Possibly not; but I know the nature of mothers."

"Beatrice is perfect as a mother," said Miss Ambient, with a tremendous sigh and her fingers interlaced on her embroidered knees.

"I shall go up and see the child," her brother went on. "Do you suppose he's asleep?"

"Beatrice won't let you see him, Mark," said the young lady, looking at me, though she addressed our companion.

"Do you call that being perfect as a mother?" Ambient inquired.

"Yes, from her point of view."

"Damn her point of view!" cried the author of *Beltraffio*. And he left the room; after which we heard him ascend the stairs.

I sat there for some ten minutes with Miss Ambient, and we, naturally, had some conversation, which was begun, I think, by my asking her what the point of view of her sister-in-law could be.

"Oh, it's so very odd," she said. "But we are so very odd, altogether. Don't you find us so?

We have lived so much abroad. Have you people like us in America?"

"You are not all alike, surely; so that I don't think I understand your question. We have no one like your brother—I may go so far as that."

"You have probably more persons like his wife," said Miss Ambient, smiling.

"I can tell you that better when you have told me about her point of view."

"Oh yes—oh yes. Well, she doesn't like his ideas. She doesn't like them for the little boy. She thinks them undesirable."

Being quite fresh from the contemplation of some of Mark Ambient's *arcana,* I was particularly in a position to appreciate this announcement. But the effect of it was to make me (after staring a moment) burst into laughter, which I instantly checked when I remembered that there was a sick child above.

"What has that infant to do with ideas?" I asked. "Surely, he can't tell one from another. Has he read his father's novels?"

"He's very precocious and very sensitive, and his mother thinks she can't begin to guard him too early." Miss Ambient's head drooped a little to one side, and her eyes fixed themselves on futurity. Then, suddenly, there was a strange alteration in her face; she gave a smile that was more joyless than her gravity—a conscious, insincere smile, and added, "When one has children, it's a great responsibility—what one writes."

"Children are terrible critics," I answered. "I am rather glad I haven't got any."

"Do you also write then? And in the same style as my brother? And do you like that style? And do people appreciate it in America? I don't write, but I think I feel." To these and various other inquiries and remarks the young lady treated me, till we heard her brother's step in the hall again and Mark Ambient reappeared. He looked flushed and serious, and I supposed that he had seen something to alarm him in the condition of his child. His sister apparently had another idea; she gazed at him a moment as if he were a burning ship on the horizon, and simply murmured—"Poor old Mark!"

"I hope you are not anxious," I said.

"No, but I am disappointed. She won't let me in. She has locked the door, and I'm afraid to make a noise." I suppose there might have been something ridiculous in a confession of this kind, but I liked my new friend so much that for me it didn't detract from his dignity. "She tells me—from behind the door—that she will let me know if he is worse."

"It's very good of her," said Miss Ambient.

I had exchanged a glance with Mark in which it is possible that he read that my pity for him was untinged with contempt—though I know not why he should have cared; and as, presently, his sister got up and took her bedroom candlestick, he proposed that we should go back to his study. We sat there till after midnight; he put himself into his slippers, into an old velvet jacket, lighted an ancient pipe, and talked considerably less than he had done before. There were longish pauses

in our communion, but they only made me feel that we had advanced in intimacy. They helped me, too, to understand my friend's personal situation, and to perceive that it was by no means the happiest possible. When his face was quiet, it was vaguely troubled; it seemed to me to show that for him, too, life was a struggle, as it has been for many other men of genius. At last I prepared to leave him, and then, to my ineffable joy, he gave me some of the sheets of his forthcoming book—it was not finished, but he had indulged in the luxury, so dear to writers of deliberation, of having it "set up," from chapter to chapter, as he advanced—he gave me, I say, the early pages, the *prémices*, as the French have it, of this new fruit of his imagination, to take to my room and look over at my leisure. I was just quitting him when the door of his study was noiselessly pushed open, and Mrs. Ambient stood before us. She looked at us a moment, with her candle in her hand, and then she said to her husband that as she supposed he had not gone to bed she had come down to tell him that Dolcino was more quiet and would probably be better in the morning. Mark Ambient made no reply; he simply slipped past her, in the doorway, as if he were afraid she would seize him in his passage, and bounded upstairs, to judge for himself of his child's condition. Mrs. Ambient looked slightly discomfited, and for a moment I thought she was going to give chase to her husband. But she resigned herself, with a sigh, while her eyes wandered over the lamp-lit room, where various books,

at which I had been looking, were pulled out of their places on the shelves, and the fumes of tobacco seemed to hang in mid-air. I bade her good-night, and then, without intention, by a kind of fatality, the perversity which had already made me insist unduly on talking with her about her husband's achievements, I alluded to the precious proof-sheets with which Ambient had entrusted me, and which I was nursing there under my arm. "It is the opening chapters of his new book," I said. "Fancy my satisfaction at being allowed to carry them to my room!"

She turned away, leaving me to take my candlestick from the table in the hall; but before we separated, thinking it apparently a good occasion to let me know once for all—since I was beginning, it would seem, to be quite "thick" with my host—that there was no fitness in my appealing to her for sympathy in such a case; before we separated, I say, she remarked to me, with her quick, round, well-bred utterance, "I daresay you attribute to me ideas that I haven't got. I don't take that sort of interest in my husband's proof-sheets. I consider his writings most objectionable!"

II.

I HAD some curious conversation the next morning with Miss Ambient, whom I found strolling in the garden before breakfast. The whole place looked as fresh and trim, amid the twitter of the birds, as if, an hour before, the housemaids had been turned into it with their dustpans and

feather-brushes. I almost hesitated to light a cigarette, and was doubly startled when, in the act of doing so, I suddenly perceived the sister of my host, who had, in any case, something of the oddity of an apparition, standing before me. She might have been posing for her photograph. Her sad-coloured robe arranged itself in serpentine folds at her feet; her hands locked themselves listlessly together in front; and her chin rested upon a *cinque-cento* ruff. The first thing I did, after bidding her good morning, was to ask her for news of her little nephew—to express the hope that she had heard he was better. She was able to gratify this hope, and spoke as if we might expect to see him during the day. We walked through the shrubberies together, and she gave me a great deal of information about her brother's ménage, which offered me an opportunity to mention to her that his wife had told me, the night before, that she thought his productions objectionable.

"She doesn't usually come out with that so soon!" Miss Ambient exclaimed, in answer to this piece of gossip.

"Poor lady, she saw that I am a fanatic."

"Yes, she won't like you for that. But you mustn't mind, if the rest of us like you! Beatrice thinks a work of art ought to have a 'purpose.' But she's a charming woman—don't you think her charming?—she's such a type of the lady."

"She's very beautiful," I answered; while I reflected that though it was true, apparently, that Mark Ambient was mis-mated, it was also per-

ceptible that his sister was perfidious. She told me that her brother and his wife had no other difference but this one, that she thought his writings immoral and his influence pernicious. It was a fixed idea; she was afraid of these things for the child. I answered that it was not a trifle—a woman's regarding her husband's mind as a well of corruption; and she looked quite struck with the novelty of my remark. "But there hasn't been any of the sort of trouble that there so often is among married people," she said. "I suppose you can judge for yourself that Beatrice isn't at all—well, whatever they call it when a woman misbehaves herself. And Mark doesn't make love to other people, either. I assure you he doesn't! All the same, of course, from her point of view, you know, she has a dread of my brother's influence on the child—on the formation of his character, of his principles. It is as if it were a subtle poison, or a contagion, or something that would rub off on Dolcino when his father kisses him or holds him on his knee. If she could, she would prevent Mark from ever touching him. Every one knows it; visitors see it for themselves; so there is no harm in my telling you. Isn't it excessively odd? It comes from Beatrice's being so religious, and so tremendously moral, and all that. And then, of course, we mustn't forget," my companion added, unexpectedly, "that some of Mark's ideas are—well, really—rather queer!"

I reflected, as we went into the house, where we found Ambient unfolding the *Observer* at the breakfast-table, that none of them were probably

quite so queer as his sister. Mrs. Ambient did not appear at breakfast, being rather tired with her ministrations, during the night, to Dolcino. Her husband mentioned, however, that she was hoping to go to church. I afterwards learned that she did go, but I may as well announce without delay that he and I did not accompany her. It was while the church-bell was murmuring in the distance that the author of *Beltraffio* led me forth for the ramble he had spoken of in his note. I will not attempt to say where we went, or to describe what we saw. We kept to the fields and copses and commons, and breathed the same sweet air as the nibbling donkeys and the browsing sheep, whose woolliness seemed to me, in those early days of my acquaintance with English objects, but a part of the general texture of the small, dense landscape, which looked as if the harvest were gathered by the shears. Everything was full of expression for Mark Ambient's visitor—from the big, bandy-legged geese, whose whiteness was a "note," amid all the tones of green, as they wandered beside a neat little oval pool, the foreground of a thatched and whitewashed inn, with a grassy approach and a pictorial sign—from these humble wayside animals to the crests of high woods which let a gable or a pinnacle peep here and there, and looked, even at a distance, like trees of good company, conscious of an individual profile. I admired the hedgerows, I plucked the faint-hued heather, and I was for ever stopping to say how charming I thought the thread-like footpaths across the fields, which

wandered, in a diagonal of finer grain, from one smooth stile to another. Mark Ambient was abundantly good-natured, and was as much entertained with my observations as I was with the literary allusions of the landscape. We sat and smoked upon stiles, broaching paradoxes in the decent English air; we took short cuts across a park or two, where the bracken was deep, and my companion nodded to the old woman at the gate; we skirted rank covers, which rustled here and there as we passed, and we stretched ourselves at last on a heathery hillside where, if the sun was not too hot, neither was the earth too cold, and where the country lay beneath us in a rich blue mist. Of course I had already told Ambient what I thought of his new novel, having the previous night read every word of the opening chapters before I went to bed.

"I am not without hope of being able to make it my best," he said, as I went back to the subject, while we turned up our heels to the sky. "At least the people who dislike my prose—and there are a great many of them, I believe—will dislike this work most." This was the first time I had heard him allude to the people who couldn't read him—a class which is supposed always to sit heavy upon the consciousness of the man of letters. A man organised for literature, as Mark Ambient was, must certainly have had the normal proportion of sensitiveness, of irritability; the artistic *ego*, capable in some cases of such monstrous development, must have been, in his composition, sufficiently erect and definite. I will

not therefore go so far as to say that he never thought of his detractors, or that he had any illusions with regard to the number of his admirers (he could never so far have deceived himself as to believe he was popular); but I may at least affirm that adverse criticism, as I had occasion to perceive later, ruffled him visibly but little, that he had an air of thinking it quite natural he should be offensive to many minds, and that he very seldom talked about the newspapers—which, by the way, were always very stupid in regard to the author of *Beltraffio*. Of course he may have thought about them—the newspapers—night and day; the only point I wish to make is that he didn't show it; while, at the same time, he didn't strike one as a man who was on his guard. I may add that, as regards his hope of making the work on which he was then engaged the best of his books, it was only partly carried out. That place belongs, incontestably, to *Beltraffio*, in spite of the beauty of certain parts of its successor. I am pretty sure, however, that he had, at the moment of which I speak, no sense of failure; he was in love with his idea, which was indeed magnificent, and though for him, as (I suppose) for every artist, the act of execution had in it as much torment as joy, he saw his work growing a little every day and filling out the largest plan he had yet conceived. "I want to be truer than I have ever been," he said, settling himself on his back, with his hands clasped behind his head; "I want to give an impression of life itself. No, you may say what you will, I have always arranged

things too much, always smoothed them down and rounded them off and tucked them in—done everything to them that life doesn't do. I have been a slave to the old superstitions."

"You a slave, my dear Mark Ambient? You have the freest imagination of our day!"

"All the more shame to me to have done some of the things I have! The reconciliation of the two women in *Ginistrella*, for instance—which could never really have taken place. That sort of thing is ignoble; I blush when I think of it! This new affair must be a golden vessel, filled with the purest distillation of the actual; and oh, how it bothers me, the shaping of the vase—the hammering of the metal! I have to hammer it so fine, so smooth; I don't do more than an inch or two a day. And all the while I have to be so careful not to let a drop of the liquor escape! When I see the kind of things that Life does, I despair of ever catching her peculiar trick. She has an impudence, Life! If one risked a fiftieth part of the effects she risks! It takes ever so long to believe it. You don't know yet, my dear fellow. It isn't till one has been watching Life for forty years that one finds out half of what she's up to! Therefore one's earlier things must inevitably contain a mass of rot. And with what one sees, on one side, with its tongue in its cheek, defying one to be real enough, and on the other the *bonnes gens* rolling up their eyes at one's cynicism, the situation has elements of the ludicrous which the artist himself is doubtless in a position to appreciate better than any one else.

Of course one mustn't bother about the *bonnes gens*," Mark Ambient went on, while my thoughts reverted to his ladylike wife, as interpreted by his remarkable sister.

"To sink your shaft deep, and polish the plate through which people look into it—that's what your work consists of," I remember remarking.

"Ah, polishing one's plate—that is the torment of execution!" he exclaimed, jerking himself up and sitting forward. "The effort to arrive at a surface—if you think a surface necessary—some people don't, happily for them! My dear fellow, if you could see the surface I dream of—as compared with the one with which I have to content myself. Life is really too short for art—one hasn't time to make one's shell ideally hard. Firm and bright—firm and bright!—the devilish thing has a way, sometimes, of being bright without being firm. When I rap it with my knuckles it doesn't give the right sound. There are horrible little flabby spots where I have taken the second-best word, because I couldn't for the life of me think of the best. If you knew how stupid I am sometimes! They look to me now like pimples and ulcers on the brow of beauty!"

"That's very bad—very bad," I said, as gravely as I could.

"Very bad? It's the highest social offence I know; it ought—it absolutely ought—I'm quite serious—to be capital. If I knew I should be hanged else, I should manage to find the best word. The people who couldn't—some of them don't know it when they see it—would shut their

inkstands, and we shouldn't be deluged by this flood of rubbish !"

I will not attempt to repeat everything that passed between us or to explain just how it was that, every moment I spent in his company, Mark Ambient revealed to me more and more that he looked at all things from the standpoint of the artist, felt all life as literary material. There are people who will tell me that this is a poor way of feeling it, and I am not concerned to defend my statement—having space merely to remark that there is something to be said for any interest which makes a man feel so much. If Mark Ambient did really, as I suggested above, have imaginative contact with "all life," I, for my part, envy him his *arrière-pensée.* At any rate it was through the receipt of this impression of him that by the time we returned I had acquired the feeling of intimacy I have noted. Before we got up for the homeward stretch he alluded to his wife's having once—or perhaps more than once—asked him whether he should like Dolcino to read *Beltraffio.* I think he was unconscious at the moment of all that this conveyed to me—as well, doubtless, of my extreme curiosity to hear what he had replied. He had said that he hoped very much Dolcino would read all his works—when he was twenty; he should like him to know what his father had done. Before twenty it would be useless—he wouldn't understand them.

"And meanwhile do you propose to hide them—to lock them up in a drawer?" Mrs. Ambient had inquired.

"Oh no; we must simply tell him that they are not intended for small boys. If you bring him up properly, after that he won't touch them."

To this Mrs. Ambient had made answer that it would be very awkward when he was about fifteen, and I asked her husband if it was his opinion in general, then, that young people should not read novels.

"Good ones—certainly not!" said my companion. I suppose I had had other views, for I remember saying that, for myself, I was not sure it was bad for them—if the novels were "good" enough. "Bad for *them*, I don't say so much!" Ambient exclaimed. "But very bad, I am afraid, for the novel." That oblique, accidental allusion to his wife's attitude was followed by a franker style of reference as we walked home. "The difference between us is simply the opposition between two distinct ways of looking at the world, which have never succeeded in getting on together, or making any kind of common ménage, since the beginning of time. They have borne all sorts of names, and my wife would tell you it's the difference between Christian and Pagan. I may be a pagan, but I don't like the name—it sounds sectarian. She thinks me, at any rate, no better than an ancient Greek. It's the difference between making the most of life and making the least—so that you'll get another better one in some other time and place. Will it be a sin to make the most of that one too, I wonder? and shall we have to be bribed off in the future state, as well as in the present? Perhaps I care too much for

beauty—I don't know; I delight in it, I adore it, I think of it continually, I try to produce it, to reproduce it. My wife holds that we shouldn't think too much about it. She's always afraid of that—always on her guard. I don't know what she has got on her back! And she's so pretty, too, herself! Don't you think she's lovely? She was, at any rate, when I married her. At that time I wasn't aware of that difference I speak of—I thought it all came to the same thing: in the end, as they say. Well, perhaps it will in the end. I don't know what the end will be. Moreover, I care for seeing things as they are; that's the way I try to show them in my novels. But you mustn't talk to Mrs. Ambient about things as they are. She has a mortal dread of things as they are."

"She's afraid of them for Dolcino," I said: surprised a moment afterwards at being in a position—thanks to Miss Ambient—to be so explanatory; and surprised even now that Mark shouldn't have shown visibly that he wondered what the deuce I knew about it. But he didn't; he simply exclaimed, with a tenderness that touched me—

"Ah, nothing shall ever hurt *him!*" He told me more about his wife before we arrived at the gate of his house, and if it be thought that he was querulous, I am afraid I must admit that he had some of the foibles as well as the gifts of the artistic temperament; adding, however, instantly, that hitherto, to the best of my belief, he had very rarely complained. "She thinks me immoral—

that's the long and short of it," he said, as we paused outside a moment, and his hand rested on one of the bars of his gate ; while his conscious, expressive, perceptive eyes—the eyes of a foreigner, I had begun to account them, much more than of the usual Englishman—viewing me now evidently as quite a familiar friend, took part in the declaration. "It's very strange, when one thinks it all over, and there's a grand comicality in it which I should like to bring out. She is a very nice woman, extraordinarily well behaved, upright, and clever, and with a tremendous lot of good sense about a good many matters. Yet her conception of a novel—she has explained it to me once or twice, and she doesn't do it badly, as exposition—is a thing so false that it makes me blush. It is a thing so hollow, so dishonest, so lying, in which life is so blinked and blinded, so dodged and disfigured, that it makes my ears burn. It's two different ways of looking at the whole affair," he repeated, pushing open the gate. "And they are irreconcilable!" he added with a sigh. We went forward to the house, but on the walk, half way to the door, he stopped, and said to me, "If you are going into this kind of thing, there's a fact you should know beforehand; it may save you some disappointment. There's a hatred of art—there's a hatred of literature!" I looked up at the charming house, with its genial colour and crookedness, and I answered with a smile that those evil passions might exist, but that I should never have expected to find them there. "Oh, it doesn't matter, after all," he said, laughing;

which I was glad to hear, for I was reproaching myself with having excited him.

If I had, his excitement soon passed off, for at lunch he was delightful; strangely delightful, considering that the difference between himself and his wife was, as he had said, irreconcilable. He had the art, by his manner, by his smile, by his natural kindliness, of reducing the importance of it in the common concerns of life, and Mrs. Ambient, I must add, lent herself to this transaction with a very good grace. I watched her, at table, for further illustrations of that fixed idea of which Miss Ambient had spoken to me; for in the light of the united revelations of her sister-in-law and her husband, she had come to seem to me a very singular personage. I am obliged to say that the signs of a fanatical temperament were not more striking in my hostess than before; it was only after a while that her air of incorruptible conformity, her tapering, monosyllabic correctness, began to appear to be themselves a cold, thin flame. Certainly, at first, she looked like a woman with as few passions as possible; but if she had a passion at all, it would be that of Philistinism. She might have been, for there are guardian-spirits, I suppose, of all great principles—the angel of propriety. Mark Ambient, apparently, ten years before, had simply perceived that she was an angel, without asking himself of what. He had been quite right in calling my attention to her beauty. In looking for the reason why he should have married her, I saw, more than before, that she was, physically speaking, a wonderfully cultivated human plant—

that she must have given him many ideas and images. It was impossible to be more pencilled, more garden-like, more delicately tinted and petalled.

If I had had it in my heart to think Ambient a little of a hypocrite for appearing to forget at table everything he had said to me during our walk, I should instantly have cancelled such a judgment on reflecting that the good news his wife was able to give him about their little boy was reason enough for his sudden air of happiness. It may have come partly, too, from a certain remorse at having complained to me of the fair lady who sat there—a desire to show me that he was after all not so miserable. Dolcino continued to be much better, and he had been promised he should come down stairs after he had had his dinner. As soon as we had risen from our own meal Ambient slipped away, evidently for the purpose of going to his child; and no sooner had I observed this than I became aware that his wife had simultaneously vanished. It happened that Miss Ambient and I, both at the same moment, saw the tail of her dress whisk out of a doorway—which led the young lady to smile at me, as if I now knew all the secrets of the place. I passed with her into the garden, and we sat down on a dear old bench which rested against the west wall of the house. It was a perfect spot for the middle period of a Sunday in June, and its felicity seemed to come partly from an antique sun-dial which, rising in front of us and forming the centre of a small, intricate parterre, measured the moments

ever so slowly, and made them safe for leisure and talk. The garden bloomed in the suffused afternoon, the tall beeches stood still for an example, and, behind and above us, a rose-tree of many seasons, clinging to the faded grain of the brick, expressed the whole character of the scene in a familiar, exquisite smell. It seemed to me a place for genius to have every sanction, and not to encounter challenges and checks. Miss Ambient asked me if I had enjoyed my walk with her brother, and whether we had talked of many things.

"Well, of most things," I said, smiling, though I remembered that we had not talked of Miss Ambient.

"And don't you think some of his theories are very peculiar?"

"Oh, I guess I agree with them all." I was very particular, for Miss Ambient's entertainment, to guess.

"Do you think art is everything?" she inquired in a moment.

"In art, of course I do!"

"And do you think beauty is everything?"

"I don't know about its being everything. But it's very delightful."

"Of course it is difficult for a woman to know how far to go," said my companion. "I adore everything that gives a charm to life. I am intensely sensitive to form. But sometimes I draw back—don't you see what I mean?—I don't quite see where I shall be landed. I only want to be quiet, after all," Miss Ambient continued, in

a tone of stifled yearning which seemed to indicate that she had not yet arrived at her desire. "And one must be good, at any rate, must not one?" she inquired, with a cadence apparently intended for an assurance that my answer would settle this recondite question for her. It was difficult for me to make it very original, and I am afraid I repaid her confidence with an unblushing platitude. I remember, moreover, appending to it an inquiry, equally destitute of freshness, and still more wanting perhaps in tact, as to whether she did not mean to go to church, as that was an obvious way of being good. She replied that she had performed this duty in the morning, and that for her, on Sunday afternoon, supreme virtue consisted in answering the week's letters. Then suddenly, without transition, she said to me, "It's quite a mistake about Dolcino being better. I have seen him, and he's not at all right."

"Surely his mother would know, wouldn't she?" I suggested.

She appeared for a moment to be counting the leaves on one of the great beeches. "As regards most matters, one can easily say what, in a given situation, my sister-in-law would do. But as regards this one, there are strange elements at work."

"Strange elements? Do you mean in the constitution of the child?"

"No, I mean in my sister-in-law's feelings."

"Elements of affection, of course; elements of anxiety. Why do you call them strange?"

She repeated my words. "Elements of affection, elements of anxiety. She is very anxious."

Miss Ambient made me vaguely uneasy—she almost frightened me, and I wished she would go and write her letters. "His father will have seen him now," I said, "and if he is not satisfied he will send for the doctor."

"The doctor ought to have been here this morning. He lives only two miles away."

I reflected that all this was very possibly only a part of the general tragedy of Miss Ambient's view of things; but I asked her why she hadn't urged such a necessity upon her sister-in-law. She answered me with a smile of extraordinary significance, and told me that I must have very little idea of what her relations with Beatrice were; but I must do her the justice to add that she went on to make herself a little more comprehensible by saying that it was quite reason enough for her sister not to be alarmed that Mark would be sure to be. He was always nervous about the child, and as they were predestined by nature to take opposite views, the only thing for Beatrice was to cultivate a false optimism. If Mark were not there, she would not be at all easy. I remembered what he had said to me about their dealings with Dolcino—that between them they would put an end to him; but I did not repeat this to Miss Ambient: the less so that just then her brother emerged from the house, carrying his child in his arms. Close behind him moved his wife, grave and pale; the boy's face was turned over Ambient's shoulder, towards his mother. We got up to receive the group, and as they came near us Dolcino turned round. I caught, on his enchant-

ing little countenance, a smile of recognition, and for the moment would have been quite content with it. Miss Ambient, however, received another impression, and I make haste to say that her quick sensibility, in which there was something maternal, argues that in spite of her affectations there was a strain of kindness in her. "It won't do at all—it won't do at all," she said to me under her breath. "I shall speak to Mark about the doctor."

The child was rather white, but the main difference I saw in him was that he was even more beautiful than the day before. He had been dressed in his festal garments—a velvet suit and a crimson sash—and he looked like a little invalid prince, too young to know condescension, and smiling familiarly on his subjects.

"Put him down, Mark, he's not comfortable," Mrs. Ambient said.

"Should you like to stand on your feet, my boy?" his father asked.

"Oh yes; I'm remarkably well," said the child.

Mark placed him on the ground; he had shining, pointed slippers, with enormous bows. "Are you happy now, Mr. Ambient?"

"Oh yes, I am particularly happy," Dolcino replied. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when his mother caught him up, and in a moment, holding him on her knees, she took her place on the bench where Miss Ambient and I had been sitting. This young lady said something to her brother, in consequence of which the two wandered away into the garden together. I remained with Mrs. Ambient; but as a servant had brought out

a couple of chairs I was not obliged to seat myself beside her. Our conversation was not animated, and I, for my part, felt there would be a kind of hypocrisy in my trying to make myself agreeable to Mrs. Ambient. I didn't dislike her—I rather admired her; but I was aware that I differed from her inexpressibly. Then I suspected, what I afterwards definitely knew and have already intimated, that the poor lady had taken a dislike to me; and this of course was not encouraging. She thought me an obtrusive and even depraved young man, whom a perverse Providence had dropped upon their quiet lawn to flatter her husband's worst tendencies. She did me the honour to say to Miss Ambient, who repeated the speech, that she didn't know when she had seen her husband take such a fancy to a visitor; and she measured, apparently, my evil influence by Mark's appreciation of my society. I had a consciousness, not yet acute, but quite sufficient, of all this; but I must say that if it chilled my flow of small-talk, it didn't prevent me from thinking that the beautiful mother and beautiful child, interlaced there against their background of roses, made a picture such as I perhaps should not soon see again. I was free, I supposed, to go into the house and write letters, to sit in the drawing-room, to repair to my own apartment and take a nap; but the only use I made of my freedom was to linger still in my chair and say to myself that the light hand of Sir Joshua might have painted Mark Ambient's wife and son. I found myself looking perpetually at Dolcino, and Dolcino looked back at me, and

that was enough to detain me. When he looked at me he smiled, and I felt it was an absolute impossibility to abandon a child who was smiling at one like that. His eyes never wandered; they attached themselves to mine, as if among all the small incipient things of his nature there was a desire to say something to me. If I could have taken him upon my own knee he perhaps would have managed to say it; but it would have been far too delicate a matter to ask his mother to give him up, and it has remained a constant regret for me that on that Sunday afternoon I did not, even for a moment, hold Dolcino in my arms. He had said that he felt remarkably well, and that he was especially happy; but though he may have been happy, with his charming head pillowed on his mother's breast and his little crimson silk legs depending from her lap, I did not think he looked well. He made no attempt to walk about; he was content to swing his legs softly and strike one as languid and angelic.

Mark came back to us with his sister; and Miss Ambient, making some remark about having to attend to her correspondence, passed into the house. Mark came and stood in front of his wife, looking down at the child, who immediately took hold of his hand, keeping it while he remained. "I think Allingham ought to see him," Ambient said; "I think I will walk over and fetch him."

"That's Gwendolen's idea, I suppose," Mrs. Ambient replied, very sweetly.

"It's not such an out-of-the-way idea, when one's child is ill."

"I'm not ill, papa; I'm much better now," Dolcino remarked.

"Is that the truth, or are you only saying it to be agreeable? You have a great idea of being agreeable, you know."

The boy seemed to meditate on this distinction, this imputation, for a moment; then his exaggerated eyes, which had wandered, caught my own as I watched him. "Do *you* think me agreeable?" he inquired, with the candour of his age and with a smile that made his father turn round to me, laughing, and ask, mutely, with a glance, "Isn't he adorable?"

"Then why don't you hop about, if you feel so lusty?" Ambient went on, while the boy swung his hand.

"Because mamma is holding me close!"

"Oh yes; I know how mamma holds you when I come near!" Ambient exclaimed, looking at his wife.

She turned her charming eyes up to him, without deprecation or concession, and after a moment she said, "You can go for Allingham if you like. I think myself it would be better. You ought to drive."

"She says that to get me away," Ambient remarked to me, laughing; after which he started for the doctor's.

I remained there with Mrs. Ambient, though our conversation had more pauses than speeches. The boy's little fixed white face seemed, as before, to plead with me to stay, and after a while it produced still another effect, a very curious one, which

I shall find it difficult to express. Of course I expose myself to the charge of attempting to give fantastic reasons for an act which may have been simply the fruit of a native want of discretion; and indeed the traceable consequences of that perversity were too lamentable to leave me any desire to trifle with the question. All I can say is that I acted in perfect good faith, and that Dolcino's friendly little gaze gradually kindled the spark of my inspiration. What helped it to glow were the other influences—the silent, suggestive garden-nook, the perfect opportunity (if it was not an opportunity for that, it was an opportunity for nothing), and the plea that I speak of, which issued from the child's eyes and seemed to make him say, "The mother that bore me and that presses me here to her bosom—sympathetic little organism that I am—has really the kind of sensibility which she has been represented to you as lacking; if you only look for it patiently and respectfully. How is it possible that she shouldn't have it? how is it possible that *I* should have so much of it (for I am quite full of it, dear strange gentleman), if it were not also in some degree in her? I am my father's child, but I am also my mother's, and I am sorry for the difference between them!" So it shaped itself before me, the vision of reconciling Mrs. Ambient with her husband, of putting an end to their great disagreement. The project was absurd, of course, for had I not had his word for it—spoken with all the bitterness of experience—that the gulf that divided them was well-nigh bottomless? Nevertheless, a quarter of

an hour after Mark had left us, I said to his wife that I couldn't get over what she told me the night before about her thinking her husband's writings "objectionable." I had been so very sorry to hear it, had thought of it constantly, and wondered whether it were not possible to make her change her mind. Mrs. Ambient gave me rather a cold stare—she seemed to be recommending me to mind my own business. I wish I had taken this mute counsel, but I did not. I went on to remark that it seemed an immense pity so much that was beautiful should be lost upon her.

"Nothing is lost upon me," said Mrs. Ambient. "I know they are very beautiful."

"Don't you like papa's books?" Dolcino asked, addressing his mother, but still looking at me. Then he added to me, "Won't you read them to me, American gentleman?"

"I would rather tell you some stories of my own," I said. "I know some that are very interesting."

"When will you tell them—to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, with pleasure, if that suits you."

Mrs. Ambient was silent at this. Her husband, during our walk, had asked me to remain another day; my promise to her son was an implication that I had consented; and it is not probable that the prospect was agreeable to her. This ought, doubtless, to have made me more careful as to what I said next; but all I can say is that it didn't. I presently observed that just after leaving her, the evening before, and after hearing her apply to her husband's writings the epithet I

had already quoted, I had, on going up to my room, sat down to the perusal of those sheets of his new book which he had been so good as to lend me. I had sat entranced till nearly three in the morning—I had read them twice over. "You say you haven't looked at them. I think it's such a pity you shouldn't. Do let me beg you to take them up. They are so very remarkable. I'm sure they will convert you. They place him in—really—such a dazzling light. All that is best in him is there. I have no doubt it's a great liberty, my saying all this; but excuse me, and *do* read them!"

"Do read them, mamma!" Dolcino repeated. "Do read them!"

She bent her head and closed his lips with a kiss. "Of course I know he has worked immensely over them," she said; and after this she made no remark, but sat there looking thoughtful, with her eyes on the ground. The tone of these last words was such as to leave me no spirit for further aggression, and after expressing a fear that her husband had not found the doctor at home, I got up and took a turn about the grounds. When I came back ten minutes later, she was still in her place, watching her boy, who had fallen asleep in her lap. As I drew near she put her finger to her lips, and a moment afterwards she rose, holding the child, and murmured something about its being better that he should go up stairs. I offered to carry him, and held out my hands to take him; but she thanked me and turned away, with the child seated on her arm, his head on her shoulder.

"I am very strong," she said, as she passed into the house, and her slim, flexible figure bent backwards with the filial weight. So I never touched Dolcino.

I betook myself to Ambient's study, delighted to have a quiet hour to look over his books by myself. The windows were open into the garden, the sunny stillness, the mild light of the English summer, filled the room, without quite chasing away the rich, dusky air which was a part of its charm, and which abode in the serried shelves where old morocco exhaled the fragrance of curious learning, and in the brighter intervals where medals and prints and miniatures were suspended upon a surface of faded stuff. The place had both colour and quiet; I thought it a perfect room for work, and went so far as to say to myself that if it were mine, to sit and scribble in, there was no knowing but that I might learn to write as well as the author of *Beltraffio*. This distinguished man did not turn up, and I rummaged freely among his treasures. At last I took down a book that detained me a while, and seated myself in a fine old leather chair, by the window, to turn it over. I had been occupied in this way for half an hour—a good part of the afternoon had waned—when I became conscious of another presence in the room, and, looking up from my quarto, saw that Mrs. Ambient, having pushed open the door in the same noiseless way that marked—or disguised—her entrance the night before, had advanced across the threshold. On seeing me she stopped; she had not, I think,

expected to find me. But her hesitation was only of a moment; she came straight to her husband's writing-table, as if she were looking for something. I got up and asked her if I could help her. She glanced about an instant, and then put her hand upon a roll of papers which I recognised, as I had placed it in that spot in the morning, on coming down from my room.

"Is this the new book?" she asked, holding it up.

"The very sheets, with precious annotations."

"I mean to take your advice." And she tucked the little bundle under her arm. I congratulated her cordially, and ventured to make of my triumph, as I presumed to call it, a subject of pleasantry. But she was perfectly grave, and turned away from me, as she had presented herself, without a smile; after which I settled down to my quarto again, with the reflection that Mrs. Ambient was a queer woman. My triumph, too, suddenly seemed to me rather vain. A woman who couldn't smile in the right place would never understand Mark Ambient. He came in at last in person, having brought the doctor back with him. "He was away from home," Mark said, "and I went after him—to where he was supposed to be. He had left the place, and I followed him to two or three others, which accounts for my delay." He was now with Mrs. Ambient, looking at the child, and was to see Mark again before leaving the house. My host noticed, at the end of ten minutes, that the proof-sheets of his new book had been removed from the table, and when I

told him, in reply to his question as to what I knew about them, that Mrs. Ambient had carried them off to read, he turned almost pale for an instant with surprise. "What has suddenly made her so curious?" he exclaimed; and I was obliged to tell him that I was at the bottom of the mystery. I had had it on my conscience to assure her that she really ought to know of what her husband was capable. "Of what I am capable? *Elle ne s'en doute que trop!*" said Ambient, with a laugh; but he took my meddling very good-naturedly, and contented himself with adding that he was very much afraid she would burn up the sheets, with his emendations, of which he had no duplicate. The doctor paid a long visit in the nursery, and before he came down I retired to my own quarters, where I remained till dinner-time. On entering the drawing-room at this hour I found Miss Ambient in possession, as she had been the evening before.

"I was right about Dolcino," she said as soon as she saw me, with a strange little air of triumph. "He is really very ill."

"Very ill! Why, when I last saw him, at four o'clock, he was in fairly good form."

"There has been a change for the worse—very sudden and rapid—and when the doctor got here he found diphtheritic symptoms. He ought to have been called, as I knew, in the morning, and the child oughtn't to have been brought into the garden."

"My dear lady, he was very happy there," I answered, much appalled.

"He would be happy anywhere. I have no doubt he is happy now, with his poor little throat in a state——" She dropped her voice as her brother came in, and Mark let us know that, as a matter of course, Mrs. Ambient would not appear. It was true that Dolcino had developed diphtheritic symptoms, but he was quiet for the present, and his mother was earnestly watching him. She was a perfect nurse, Mark said, and the doctor was coming back at ten o'clock. Our dinner was not very gay; Ambient was anxious and alarmed, and his sister irritated me by her constant tacit assumption, conveyed in the very way she nibbled her bread and sipped her wine, of having "told me so." I had had no disposition to deny anything she told me, and I could not see that her satisfaction in being justified by the event made poor Dolcino's throat any better. The truth is that, as the sequel proved, Miss Ambient had some of the qualities of the sibyl, and had therefore, perhaps, a right to the sibylline contortions. Her brother was so preoccupied that I felt my presence to be an indiscretion, and was sorry I had promised to remain over the morrow. I said to Mark that, evidently, I had better leave them in the morning; to which he replied that, on the contrary, if he was to pass the next days in the fidgets my company would be an extreme relief to him. The fidgets had already begun for him, poor fellow, and as we sat in his study with our cigars, after dinner, he wandered to the door whenever he heard the sound of the doctor's wheels. Miss Ambient, who shared this apart-

ment with us, gave me at such moments significant glances; she had gone up stairs before rejoining us, to ask after the child. His mother and his nurse gave a tolerable account of him; but Miss Ambient found his fever high and his symptoms very grave. The doctor came at ten o'clock, and I went to bed after hearing from Mark that he saw no present cause for alarm. He had made every provision for the night, and was to return early in the morning.

I quitted my room at eight o'clock the next day, and as I came down stairs saw, through the open door of the house, Mrs. Ambient standing at the front gate of the grounds, in colloquy with the physician. She wore a white dressing-gown, but her shining hair was carefully tucked away in its net, and in the freshness of the morning, after a night of watching, she looked as much "the type of the lady" as her sister-in-law had described her. Her appearance, I suppose, ought to have reassured me; but I was still nervous and uneasy, so that I shrank from meeting her with the necessary question about Dolcino. None the less, however, was I impatient to learn how the morning found him; and, as Mrs. Ambient had not seen me, I passed into the grounds by a roundabout way, and, stopping at a further gate, hailed the doctor just as he was driving away. Mrs. Ambient had returned to the house before he got into his gig.

"Excuse me—but, as a friend of the family, I should like very much to hear about the little boy."

The doctor, who was a stout, sharp man, looked

at me from head to foot, and then he said, "I'm sorry to say I haven't seen him."

"Haven't seen him?"

"Mrs. Ambient came down to meet me as I alighted, and told me that he was sleeping so soundly, after a restless night, that she didn't wish him disturbed. I assured her I wouldn't disturb him, but she said he was quite safe now and she could look after him herself.

"Thank you very much. Are you coming back?"

"No, sir; I'll be hanged if I come back!" exclaimed Dr. Allingham, who was evidently very angry. And he started his horse again with the whip.

I wandered back into the garden, and five minutes later Miss Ambient came forth from the house to greet me. She explained that breakfast would not be served for some time, and that she wished to catch the doctor before he went away. I informed her that this functionary had come and departed, and I repeated to her what he had told me about his dismissal. This made Miss Ambient very serious—very serious indeed—and she sank into a bench, with dilated eyes, hugging her elbows with crossed arms. She indulged in many ejaculations, she confessed that she was infinitely perplexed, and she finally told me what her own last news of her nephew had been. She had sat up very late—after me, after Mark—and before going to bed had knocked at the door of the child's room, which was opened to her by the nurse. This good woman had admitted her, and

she had found Dolcino quiet, but flushed and "unnatural," with his mother sitting beside his bed. "She held his hand in one of hers," said Miss Ambient, "and in the other—what do you think? —the proof-sheets of Mark's new book! She was reading them there, intently: did you ever hear of anything so extraordinary? Such a very odd time to be reading an author whom she never could abide!" In her agitation Miss Ambient was guilty of this vulgarism of speech, and I was so impressed by her narrative that it was only in recalling her words later that I noticed the lapse. Mrs. Ambient had looked up from her reading with her finger on her lips—I recognised the gesture she had addressed to me in the afternoon—and, though the nurse was about to go to rest, had not encouraged her sister-in-law to relieve her of any part of her vigil. But certainly, then, Dolcino's condition was far from reassuring—his poor little breathing was most painful; and what change could have taken place in him in those few hours that would justify Beatrice in denying the physician access to him? This was the moral of Miss Ambient's anecdote—the moral for herself at least. The moral for me, rather, was that it *was* a very singular time for Mrs. Ambient to be going into a novelist she had never appreciated and who had simply happened to be recommended to her by a young American she disliked. I thought of her sitting there in the sick-chamber in the still hours of the night, after the nurse had left her, turning over those pages of genius and wrestling with their magical influence.

I must relate very briefly the circumstances of the rest of my visit to Mark Ambient—it lasted but a few hours longer—and devote but three words to my later acquaintance with him. That lasted five years—till his death—and was full of interest, of satisfaction, and, I may add, of sadness. The main thing to be said with regard to it is, that I had a secret from him. I believe he never suspected it, though of this I am not absolutely sure. If he did, the line he had taken, the line of absolute negation of the matter to himself, shows an immense effort of the will. I may tell my secret now, giving it for what it is worth, now that Mark Ambient has gone, that he has begun to be alluded to as one of the famous early dead, and that his wife does not survive him; now, too, that Miss Ambient, whom I also saw at intervals during the years that followed, has, with her embroideries and her attitudes, her necromantic glances and strange intuitions, retired to a Sisterhood, where, as I am told, she is deeply immured and quite lost to the world.

Mark came into breakfast after his sister and I had for some time been seated there. He shook hands with me in silence, kissed his sister, opened his letters and newspapers, and pretended to drink his coffee. But I could see that these movements were mechanical, and I was little surprised when, suddenly he pushed away everything that was before him, and with his head in his hands and his elbows on the table, sat staring strangely at the cloth.

"What is the matter *fratello mio?*" Miss Ambient inquired, peeping from behind the urn.

He answered nothing, but got up with a certain violence and strode to the window. We rose to our feet, his sister and I, by a common impulse, exchanging a glance of some alarm, while he stared for a moment into the garden. "In heaven's name, what has got possession of Beatrice?" he cried at last, turning round with an almost haggard face. And he looked from one of us to the other; the appeal was addressed to me as well as to his sister.

Miss Ambient gave a shrug. "My poor Mark, Beatrice is always—Beatrice!"

"She has locked herself up with the boy—bolted and barred the door—she refuses to let me come near him!" Ambient went on.

"She refused to let the doctor see him an hour ago!" Miss Ambient remarked, with intention, as they say on the stage.

"Refused to let the doctor see him? By heaven, I'll smash in the door!" And Mark brought his fist down upon the table, so that all the breakfast-service rang.

I begged Miss Ambient to go up and try to have speech of her sister-in-law, and I drew Mark out into the garden. "You're exceedingly nervous, and Mrs. Ambient is probably right," I said to him. "Women know—women should be supreme in such a situation. Trust a mother—a devoted mother, my dear friend!" With such words as these I tried to soothe and comfort him, and, marvellous to relate, I succeeded, with the help of many cigarettes, in making him walk about the garden and talk, or listen at least to my own

ingenious chatter, for nearly an hour. At the end of this time Miss Ambient returned to us, with a very rapid step, holding her hand to her heart.

"Go for the doctor, Mark; go for the doctor this moment!"

"Is he dying—has she killed him?" poor Ambient cried, flinging away his cigarette.

"I don't know what she has done! But she's frightened, and now she wants the doctor."

"He told me he would be hanged if he came back," I felt myself obliged to announce.

"Precisely—therefore Mark himself must go for him, and not a messenger. You must see him and tell him it's to save your child. The trap has been ordered—it's ready."

"To save him? I'll save him, please God!" Ambient cried, bounding with his great strides across the lawn.

As soon as he had gone I felt that I ought to have volunteered in his place, and I said as much to Miss Ambient; but she checked me by grasping my arm quickly, while we heard the wheels of the dog-cart rattle away from the gate. "He's off—he's off—and now I can think! To get him away—while I think—while I think!"

"While you think of what, Miss Ambient?"

"Of the unspeakable thing that has happened under this roof!"

Her manner was habitually that of such a prophetess of ill that my first impulse was to believe I must allow here for a great exaggeration. But in a moment I saw that her emotion was real. "Dolcino *is* dying then—he is dead?"

"It's too late to save him. His mother has let him die! I tell you that, because you are sympathetic, because you have imagination," Miss Ambient was good enough to add, interrupting my expression of horror. "That's why you had the idea of making her read Mark's new book!"

"What has that to do with it? I don't understand you—your accusation is monstrous."

"I see it all—I'm not stupid," Miss Ambient went on, heedless of the harshness of my tone. "It was the book that finished her—it was that decided her!"

"Decided her? Do you mean she has murdered her child?" I demanded, trembling at my own words.

"She sacrificed him—she determined to do nothing to make him live. Why else did she lock herself up—why else did she turn away the doctor? The book gave her a horror, she determined to rescue him—to prevent him from ever being touched. He had a crisis at two o'clock in the morning. I know this from the nurse, who had left her then, but whom, for a short time, she called back. Dolcino got much worse, but she insisted on the nurse's going back to bed, and after that she was alone with him for hours."

"Do you pretend that she has no pity—that she's insane?"

"She held him in her arms—she pressed him to her breast, not to see him; but she gave him no remedies—she did nothing the doctor ordered.

Everything is there, untouched. She has had the honesty not even to throw the drugs away!"

I dropped upon the nearest bench, overcome with wonder and agitation: quite as much at Miss Ambient's terrible lucidity as at the charge she made against her sister-in-law. There was an amazing coherency in her story, and it was dreadful to me to see myself figuring in it as so proximate a cause. "You are a very strange woman, and you say strange things."

"You think it necessary to protest—but you are quite ready to believe me. You have received an impression of my sister-in-law, you have guessed of what she is capable."

I do not feel bound to say what concession on this point I made to Miss Ambient, who went on to relate to me that within the last half-hour Beatrice had had a revulsion; that she was tremendously frightened at what she had done; that her fright itself betrayed her; and that she would now give heaven and earth to save the child. "Let us hope she will!" I said, looking at my watch and trying to time poor Ambient; whereupon my companion repeated, in a singular tone, "Let us hope so!" When I asked her if she herself could do nothing, and whether she ought not to be with her sister-in-law, she replied, "You had better go and judge; she is like a wounded tigress!" I never saw Mrs. Ambient till six months after this, and therefore cannot pretend to have verified the comparison. At the latter period she was again the type of the lady. "She'll be nicer to him after this," I remember

Miss Ambient saying, in response to some quick outburst (on my part) of compassion for her brother. Although I had been in the house but thirty-six hours this young lady had treated me with extraordinary confidence, and there was therefore a certain demand which, as an intimate, I might make of her. I extracted from her a pledge that she would never say to her brother what she had just said to me; she would leave him to form his own theory of his wife's conduct. She agreed with me that there was misery enough in the house without her contributing a new anguish, and that Mrs. Ambient's proceedings might be explained, to her husband's mind, by the extravagance of a jealous devotion. Poor Mark came back with the doctor much sooner than we could have hoped, but we knew, five minutes afterward, that they arrived too late. Poor little Dolcino was more exquisitely beautiful in death than he had been in life. Mrs. Ambient's grief was frantic; she lost her head and said strange things. As for Mark's—but I will not speak of that. *Basta*, as he used to say. Miss Ambient kept her secret—I have already had occasion to say that she had her good points—but it rankled in her conscience like a guilty participation, and, I imagine, had something to do with her retiring ultimately to a Sisterhood. And, *à propos* of consciences, the reader is now in a position to judge of my compunction for my effort to convert Mrs. Ambient. I ought to mention that the death of her child in some degree converted her. When the new book came out—it

was long delayed—she read it over as a whole, and her husband told me that a few months before her death—she failed rapidly after losing her son, sank into a consumption, and faded away at Mentone—during those few supreme weeks she even dipped into *Beltraffio*.

1884.

PANDORA.

I.

IT has long been the custom of the North German Lloyd steamers, which convey passengers from Bremen to New York, to anchor for several hours in the pleasant port of Southampton, where their human cargo receives many additions. An intelligent young German, Count Otto Vogelstein, hardly knew, a few years ago, whether to condemn this custom or approve it. He leaned over the bulwarks of the *Donau* as the American passengers crossed the plank—the travellers who embark at Southampton are mainly of that nationality—and curiously, indifferently, vaguely, through the smoke of his cigar, saw them absorbed in the huge capacity of the ship, where he had the agreeable consciousness that his own nest was comfortably made. To watch from a point of vantage the struggles of later comers—of the uninformed, the unprovided, the bewildered—is an occupation not devoid of sweetness, and there was nothing to mitigate the complacency with which our young friend gave himself up to it; nothing, that is, save a natural benevolence which had not yet been extinguished by the consciousness of

official greatness. For Count Vogelstein was official, as I think you would have seen from the straightness of his back, the lustre of his light, elegant spectacles, and something discreet and diplomatic in the curve of his moustache, which looked as if it might well contribute to the principal function, as cynics say, of the lips—the concealment of thought. He had been appointed to the secretaryship of the German legation at Washington, and in these first days of the autumn he was going to take possession of his post. He was a model character for such a purpose—serious, civil, ceremonious, stiff, inquisitive, stuffed with knowledge, and convinced that at present the German empire is the country in the world most highly evolved. He was quite aware, however, of the claims of the United States, and that this portion of the globe presented an enormous field for study. The process of inquiry had already begun, in spite of his having as yet spoken to none of his fellow-passengers; for Vogelstein inquired not only with his tongue—he inquired with his eyes (that is, with his spectacles), with his ears, with his nose, with his palate, with all his senses and organs.

He was an excellent young man, and his only fault was that he had not a high sense of humour. He had enough, however, to suspect this deficiency, and he was aware that he was about to visit a highly humorous people. This suspicion gave him a certain mistrust of what might be said of him; and if circumspection is the essence of diplomacy, our young aspirant promised well. His mind contained several millions of facts,

packed too closely together for the light breeze of the imagination to draw through the mass. He was impatient to report himself to his superior in Washington, and the loss of time in an English port could only incommode him, inasmuch as the study of English institutions was no part of his mission. But, on the other hand, the day was charming; the blue sea, in Southampton Water, pricked all over with light, had no movement but that of its infinite shimmer. And he was by no means sure that he should be happy in the United States, where doubtless he should find himself soon enough disembarked. He knew that this was not an important question and that happiness was an unscientific term, which he was ashamed to use even in the silence of his thoughts. But lost in the inconsiderate crowd, and feeling himself neither in his own country nor in that to which he was in a manner accredited, he was reduced to his mere personality; so that, for the moment, to fill himself out, he tried to have an opinion on the subject of this delay to which the German steamer was subjected in English waters. It appeared to him that it might be proved to be considerably greater than the occasion demanded.

Count Vogelstein was still young enough in diplomacy to think it necessary to have opinions. He had a good many, indeed, which had been formed without difficulty; they had been received ready-made from a line of ancestors who knew what they liked. This was, of course—and he would have admitted it—an unscientific way of furnishing one's mind. Our young man was a

stiff conservative, a Junker of Junkers; he thought modern democracy a temporary phase, and expected to find many arguments against it in the United States. In regard to these things, it was a pleasure to him to feel that, with his complete training, he had been taught thoroughly to appreciate the nature of evidence. The ship was heavily laden with German emigrants, whose mission in the United States differed considerably from Count Otto's. They hung over the bulwarks, densely grouped; they leaned forward on their elbows for hours, with their shoulders on a level with their ears; the men in furred caps, smoking long-bowled pipes, the women with babies hidden in their shawls. Some were yellow Germans and some were black, and all of them looked greasy and matted with the sea-damp. They were destined to swell the current of western democracy, and Count Vogelstein doubtless said to himself that they would not improve its quality. Their numbers, however, were striking, and I know not what he thought of the nature of this evidence.

The passengers who came on board at Southampton were not of the greasy class; they were for the most part American families who had been spending the summer, or a longer period, in Europe. They had a great deal of luggage, innumerable bags and rugs and hampers and sea-chairs, and were composed largely of ladies of various ages, a little pale with anticipation, wrapped in striped shawls and crowned with very high hats and feathers. They darted to and fro across the gangway, looking for each other and for their

scattered parcels; they separated and reunited, they exclaimed and declared, they eyed with dismay the occupants of the steerage, who seemed numerous enough to sink the vessel, and their voices sounded faint and far as they rose to Vogelstein's ear over the tarred sides of the ship. He observed that in the new contingent there were many young girls, and he remembered what a lady in Dresden had once said to him—that America was a country of girls. He wondered whether he should like that, and reflected that it would be a question to study, like everything else. He had known in Dresden an American family, in which there were three daughters who used to skate with the officers; and some of the ladies now coming on board seemed to him of that same habit, except that in the Dresden days feathers were not worn quite so high.

At last the ship began to creak and slowly budge, and the delay at Southampton came to an end. The gangway was removed, and the vessel indulged in the awkward evolutions which were to detach her from the land. Count Vogelstein had finished his cigar, and he spent a long time in walking up and down the upper deck. The charming English coast passed before him, and he felt that this was the last of the old world. The American coast also might be pretty—he hardly knew what one would expect of an American coast; but he was sure it would be different. Differences, however, were half the charm of travel. As yet, indeed, there were very few on the steamer. Most of his fellow-passengers ap-

peared to be of the same persuasion, and that persuasion the least to be mistaken. They were Jews and commercial, to a man. And by this time they had lighted their cigars and put on all manner of seafaring caps, some of them with big ear-lappets, which somehow had the effect of bringing out their peculiar facial type. At last the new voyagers began to emerge from below and to look about them, vaguely, with that suspicious expression of face which is to be perceived in the newly embarked, and which, as directed to the receding land, resembles that of a person who begins to perceive that he is the victim of a trick. Earth and ocean, in such glances, are made the subject of a general objection, and many travellers, in these circumstances, have an air at once duped and superior, which seems to say that they could easily go ashore if they would.

It still wanted two hours of dinner, and, by the time Vogelstein's long legs had measured three or four miles on the deck, he was ready to settle himself in his sea-chair and draw from his pocket a Tauchnitz novel by an American author whose pages, he had been assured, would help to prepare him. On the back of his chair his name was painted in rather large letters, this being a precaution taken at the recommendation of a friend, who had told him that on the American steamers the passengers—especially the ladies—thought nothing of pilfering one's little comforts. His friend had even said that in his place he would have his coronet painted. This cynical adviser had added that the Americans are greatly im-

pressed by a coronet. I know not whether it was scepticism or modesty, but Count Vogelstein had omitted this ensign of his rank; the precious piece of furniture which, on the Atlantic voyage, is depended upon to remain steady among general concussions, was emblazoned simply with his title and name. It happened, however, that the blazonry was huge; the back of the chair was covered with enormous German characters. This time there can be no doubt; it was modesty that caused the secretary of the legation, in placing himself, to turn this portion of his seat outward, away from the eyes of his companions—to present it to the balustrade of the deck. The ship was passing the Needles—the beautiful outermost point of the Isle of Wight. Certain tall white cones of rock rose out of the purple sea; they flushed in the afternoon light, and their vague rosiness gave them a kind of human expression, in face of the cold expanse towards which the ship was turned; they seemed to say farewell, to be the last note of a peopled world. Vogelstein saw them very comfortably from his place, and after a while he turned his eyes to the other quarter, where the sky and sea, between them, managed to make so poor an opposition. Even his American novelist was more amusing than that, and he prepared to return to this author.

In the great curve which it described, however, his glance was arrested by the figure of a young lady who had just ascended to the deck, and who paused at the mouth of the companion-way. In itself this was not an extraordinary phenomenon;

but what attracted Vogelstein's attention was the fact that the young person appeared to have fixed her eyes on him. She was slim, brightly dressed, and rather pretty. Vogelstein remembered in a moment that he had noticed her among the people on the wharf at Southampton. She very soon saw that he was looking at her; whereupon she began to move along the deck with a step which seemed to indicate that she was coming straight towards him. Vogelstein had time to wonder whether she could be one of the girls he had known at Dresden; but he presently reflected that they would now be much older than this. It was true they came straight towards one, like that. This young lady, however, was no longer looking at him, and though she passed near him it was now tolerably clear that she had come upstairs simply to take a general survey. She was a quick, handsome, competent girl, and she wished to see what one could think of the ship, of the weather, of the appearance of England from such a position as that; possibly even of one's fellow-passengers. She satisfied herself promptly on these points, and then she looked about, while she walked, as if she were in search of a missing object; so that Vogelstein presently saw this was what she really had come up for. She passed near him again, and this time she almost stopped, with her eyes bent upon him attentively. He thought her conduct remarkable, even after he had perceived that it was not at his face, with its yellow moustache, she was looking, but at the chair on which he was seated. Then those words of his

friend came back to him,—the speech about the people, especially the ladies, on the American steamers taking to themselves one's little belongings. Especially the ladies, he might well say; for here was one who apparently wished to pull from under him the very chair he was sitting on. He was afraid she would ask him for it, so he pretended to read, without meeting her eye. He was conscious that she hovered near him, and he was curious to see what she would do. It seemed to him strange that such a nice-looking girl (for her appearance was really charming) should endeavour by acts so flagrant to attract the attention of a secretary of legation. At last it became evident to him that she was trying to look round a corner, as it were, trying to see what was written on the back of his chair. "She wants to find out my name; she wants to see who I am!" This reflection passed through his mind, and caused him to raise his eyes. They rested on her own —which for an appreciable moment she did not withdraw. The latter were brilliant and expressive, and surmounted a delicate aquiline nose, which, though pretty, was perhaps just a trifle too hawk-like. It was the oddest coincidence in the world; the story Vogelstein had taken up treated of a flighty, forward little American girl, who plants herself in front of a young man in the garden of an hotel. Was not the conduct of this young lady a testimony to the truthfulness of the tale, and was not Vogelstein himself in the position of the young man in the garden? That young man ended by speaking to his invader (as she

might be called), and after a very short hesitation Vogelstein followed his example. "If she wants to know who I am, she is welcome," he said to himself; and he got out of the chair, seized it by the back, and, turning it round, exhibited the superscription to the girl. She coloured slightly, but she smiled and read his name, while Vogelstein raised his hat.

"I am much obliged to you. That's all right," she remarked, as if the discovery had made her very happy.

It seemed to him indeed all right that he should be Count Otto Vogelstein; this appeared even a rather flippant mode of disposing of the fact. By way of rejoinder, he asked her if she desired his seat.

"I am much obliged to you; of course not. I thought you had one of our chairs, and I didn't like to ask you. It looks exactly like one of ours; not so much now as when you sit in it. Please sit down again. I don't want to trouble you. We have lost one of ours, and I have been looking for it everywhere. They look so much alike; you can't tell till you see the back. Of course I see there will be no mistake about yours," the young lady went on, with a frank smile. "But we have such a small name—you can scarcely see it," she added, with the same friendly intention. "Our name is Day. If you see that on anything, I should be so obliged if you would tell me. It isn't for myself, it's for my mother; she is so dependent on her chair, and that one I am looking for pulls out so beautifully. Now that you sit

down again and hide the lower part, it does look just like ours. Well, it must be somewhere. You must excuse me; I am much obliged to you."

This was a long and even confidential speech for a young woman, presumably unmarried, to make to a perfect stranger; but Miss Day acquitted herself of it with perfect simplicity and self-possession. She held up her head and stepped away, and Vogelstein could see that the foot she pressed upon the clean, smooth deck was slender and shapely. He watched her disappear through the trap by which she had ascended, and he felt more than ever like the young man in his American tale. The girl in the present case was older and not so pretty, as he could easily judge, for the image of her smiling eyes and speaking lips still hovered before him. He went back to his book with the feeling that it would give him some information about her. This was rather illogical, but it indicated a certain amount of curiosity on the part of Count Vogelstein. The girl in the book had a mother, it appeared, and so had this young lady; the former had also a brother, and he now remembered that he had noticed a young man on the wharf—a young man in a high hat and a white overcoat—who seemed united to Miss Day by this natural tie. And there was some one else too, as he gradually recollected, an older man, also in a high hat, but in a black overcoat—in black altogether—who completed the group, and who was presumably the head of the family. These reflections would indicate that Count Vogelstein read his volume of Tauchnitz rather inter-

ruptedly. Moreover, they represented a considerable waste of time; for was he not to be afloat in an oblong box, for ten days, with such people, and could it be doubted that he should see a great deal of them?

It may as well be said without delay that he did see a great deal of them. I have depicted with some precision the circumstances under which he made the acquaintance of Miss Day, because the event had a certain importance for this candid Teuton; but I must pass briefly over the incidents that immediately followed it. He wondered what it was open to him, after such an introduction, to do with regard to her, and he determined he would push through his American tale and discover what the hero did. But in a very short time he perceived that Miss Day had nothing in common with the heroine of that work, save a certain local quality and the fact that the male sex was not terrible to her. Her local quality, indeed, he took rather on trust than apprehended for himself. She was a native of a small town in the interior of the American continent; and a lady from New York, who was on the ship, and with whom he had a good deal of conversation, assured him Miss Day was exceedingly provincial. How this lady ascertained the fact did not appear, for Vogelstein observed that she held no communication with the girl. It is true that she threw some light on her processes by remarking to him that certain Americans could tell immediately who other Americans were, leaving him to judge whether or no she herself belonged to the discriminating class.

She was a Mrs. Dangerfield, a handsome, confidential, insinuating woman, and Vogelstein's talk with her took a turn that was almost philosophic. She convinced him, rather effectually, that even in a great democracy there are human differences, and that American life was full of social distinctions, of delicate shades, which foreigners are often too stupid to perceive. Did he suppose that every one knew every one else, in the biggest country in the world, and that one was not as free to choose one's company there as in the most monarchical communities? She laughed these ideas to scorn, as Vogelstein tucked her beautiful furred coverlet (they reclined together a great deal in their elongated chairs) well over her feet. How free an American lady was to choose her company she abundantly proved by not knowing any one on the steamer but Count Otto.

He could see for himself that Mr. and Mrs. Day had not her peculiar stamp. They were fat, plain, serious people, who sat side by side on the deck for hours, looking straight before them. Mrs. Day had a white face, large cheeks, and small eyes; her forehead was surrounded with a multitude of little tight black curls, and her lips and cheeks moved as if she had always a lozenge in her mouth. She wore entwined about her head an article which Mrs. Dangerfield spoke of as a "nuby"—a knitted pink scarf which covered her coiffure and encircled her neck, leaving among its convolutions a hole for her perfectly expressionless face. Her hands were folded on her stomach, and in her still, swathed figure her little bead-like eyes, which

occasionally changed their direction, alone represented life. Her husband had a stiff gray beard on his chin, and a bare, spacious upper lip, to which constant shaving had imparted a kind of hard glaze. His eyebrows were thick and his nostrils wide, and when he was uncovered, in the saloon, it was visible that his grizzled hair was dense and perpendicular. He might have looked rather grim and truculent, if it had not been for the mild, familiar, accommodating gaze with which his large, light-coloured pupils—the leisurely eyes of a silent man—appeared to consider surrounding objects. He was evidently more friendly than fierce, but he was more diffident than friendly. He liked to look at you, but he would not have pretended to understand you much nor to classify you, and would have been sorry that it should put you under an obligation. He and his wife spoke sometimes, but they seldom talked, and there was something passive and patient about them, as if they were victims of a spell. The spell, however, was evidently pleasant; it was the fascination of prosperity, the confidence of security, which sometimes makes people arrogant, but which had had such a different effect upon this simple, satisfied pair, in which further development of every kind appeared to have been arrested.

Mrs. Dangerfield told Count Vogelstein that every morning, after breakfast, the hour at which he wrote his journal, in his cabin, the old couple were guided upstairs and installed in their customary corner by Pandora. This she had learned to be the name of their elder daughter, and she was

immensely amused by her discovery. "Pandora"—that was in the highest degree typical; it placed them in the social scale, if other evidence had been wanting; you could tell that a girl was from the interior—the mysterious interior about which Vogelstein's imagination was now quite excited—when she had such a name as that. This young lady managed the whole family, even a little the small beflounced sister, who, with bold, pretty, innocent eyes, a torrent of fair, silky hair, a crimson fez, such as is worn by male Turks, very much askew on top of it, and a way of galloping and straddling about the ship in any company she could pick up (she had long, thin legs, very short skirts, and stockings of every tint), was going home, in elaborate French clothes, to resume an interrupted education. Pandora overlooked and directed her relatives; Vogelstein could see that for himself, could see that she was very active and decided, that she had in a high degree the sentiment of responsibility, and settled most of the questions that could come up for a family from the interior. The voyage was remarkably fine, and day after day it was possible to sit there under the salt sky and feel one's self rounding the great curves of the globe. The long deck made a white spot in the sharp black circle of the ocean and in the intense sea-light, while the shadow of the smoke-steamers trembled on the familiar floor, the shoes of fellow-passengers, distinctive now, and in some cases irritating, passed and repassed, accompanied, in the air so tremendously "open," that rendered all voices weak and most remarks

rather flat, by fragments of opinion on the run of the ship. Vogelstein by this time had finished his little American story, and now definitely judged that Pandora Day was not at all like the heroine. She was of quite another type ; much more serious and preoccupied, and not at all keen, as he had supposed, about making the acquaintance of gentlemen. Her speaking to him that first afternoon had been, he was bound to believe, an incident without importance for herself, in spite of her having followed it up the next day by the remark, thrown at him as she passed, with a smile that was almost familiar, "It's all right, sir. I have found that old chair!" After this she had not spoken to him again, and had scarcely looked at him. She read a great deal, and almost always French books, in fresh yellow paper ; not the lighter forms of that literature, but a volume of Sainte-Beuve, of Renan, or at the most, in the way of dissipation, of Alfred de Musset. She took frequent exercise, and almost always walked alone, not, apparently, having made many friends on the ship, and being without the resource of her parents, who, as has been related, never budged out of the cosy corner in which she planted them for the day.

Her brother was always in the smoking-room, where Vogelstein observed him, in very tight clothes, his neck encircled with a collar like a palisade. He had a sharp little face, which was not disagreeable ; he smoked enormous cigars, and began his drinking early in the day ; but his appearance gave no sign of these excesses. As

regards euchre and poker and the other distractions of the place, he was guilty of none. He evidently understood such games in perfection, for he used to watch the players, and even at moments impartially advise them ; but Vogelstein never saw the cards in his hand. He was referred to as regards disputed points, and his opinion carried the day. He took little part in the conversation, usually much relaxed, that prevailed in the smoking-room, but from time to time he made, in his soft, flat, youthful voice, a remark which everyone paused to listen to, and which was greeted with roars of laughter. Vogelstein, well as he knew English, could rarely catch the joke ; but he could see, at least, that these were the most transcendent flights of American humour. The young man, in his way, was very remarkable, for, as Vogelstein heard some one say once, after the laughter had subsided, he was only nineteen. If his sister did not resemble the dreadful little girl in the tale I have so often mentioned, there was, for Vogelstein, at least an analogy between young Mr. Day and a certain small brother—a candy-loving Madison, Hamilton, or Jefferson—who, in the Tauchnitz volume, was attributed to that unfortunate maid. This was what the little Madison would have grown up to at nineteen, and the improvement was greater than might have been expected.

The days were long, but the voyage was short, and it had almost come to an end before Count Vogelstein yielded to an attraction peculiar in its nature and finally irresistible, and, in spite of Mrs.

Dangerfield's warnings, sought an opportunity for a little continuous talk with Miss Pandora Day. To mention this sentiment without mentioning sundry other impressions of his voyage, with which it had nothing to do, is perhaps to violate proportion and give a false idea ; but to pass it by would be still more unjust. The Germans, as we know, are a transcendental people, and there was at last a vague fascination for Vogelstein in this quick, bright, silent girl, who could smile and turn vocal in an instant, who imparted a sort of originality to the filial character, and whose profile was delicate as she bent it over a volume which she cut as she read, or presented it, in absent-minded attitudes, at the side of the ship, to the horizon they had left behind. But he felt it to be a pity, as regards a possible acquaintance with her, that her parents should be heavy little burghers, that her brother should not correspond to Vogelstein's conception of a young man of the upper class, and that her sister should be a Daisy Miller *en herbe*. Repeatedly warned by Mrs. Dangerfield, the young diplomatist was doubly careful as to the relations he might form at the beginning of his sojourn in the United States. Mrs. Dangerfield reminded him, and he had made the observation himself, in other capitals, that the first year, and even the second, is the time for prudence. One is ignorant of proportions and values ; one is exposed, lonely, thankful for attention ; and one may give one's self away to people who afterwards prove a great encumbrance. Mrs. Dangerfield struck a note which resounded in

Vogelstein's imagination. She assured him that if he didn't "look out" he would be falling in love with some American girl with an impossible family. In America, when one fell in love with a girl, there was nothing to be done but marry her, and what should he say, for instance, to finding himself a near relation of Mr. and Mrs. P. W. Day? (These were the initials inscribed on the back of the two chairs of that couple.) Vogelstein felt the peril, for he could immediately think of a dozen men he knew who had married American girls. There appeared now to be a constant danger of marrying the American girl; it was something one had to reckon with, like the rise in prices, the telephone, the discovery of dynamite, the Chassepôt rifle, the socialistic spirit; it was one of the complications of modern life.

It would doubtless be too much to say that Vogelstein was afraid of falling in love with Pandora Day, a young woman who was not strikingly beautiful, and with whom he had talked, in all, but ten minutes. But, as I say, he went so far as to wish that the human belongings of a girl whose independence appeared to have no taint either of fastness, as they said in England, or of subversive opinion, and whose nose was so very well bred, should not be a little more distinguished. There was something almost comical in her attitude toward these belongings; she appeared to regard them as a care, but not as an interest; it was as if they had been entrusted to her honour and she had engaged to convey them safe to a certain point; she was detached and inadvertent; then,

suddenly, she remembered, repented, and came back to tuck her parents into their blankets, to alter the position of her mother's umbrella, to tell them something about the run of the ship. These little offices were usually performed deftly, rapidly, with the minimum of words, and when their daughter came near them, Mr. and Mrs. Day closed their eyes placidly, like a pair of household dogs that expect to be scratched. One morning she brought up the captain to present to them. She appeared to have a private and independent acquaintance with this officer, and the introduction to her parents had the air of a sudden inspiration. It was not so much an introduction as an exhibition, as if she were saying to him, "This is what they look like; see how comfortable I make them. Aren't they rather queer little people? But they leave me perfectly free. Oh, I can assure you of that. Besides, you must see it for yourself." Mr. and Mrs. Day looked up at the captain with very little change of countenance; then looked at each other in the same way. He saluted and bent towards them a moment; but Pandora shook her head, she seemed to be answering for them; she made little gestures as if she were explaining to the captain some of their peculiarities, as, for instance, that they wouldn't speak. They closed their eyes at last; she appeared to have a kind of mesmeric influence on them, and Miss Day walked away with the commander of the ship, who treated her with evident consideration, bowing very low, in spite of his supreme position, when, presently after, they separated. Vogelstein could see that she was

capable of making an impression ; and the moral of our episode is that in spite of Mrs. Dangerfield, in spite of the resolutions of his prudence, in spite of the meagreness of the conversation that had passed between them, in spite of Mr. and Mrs. Day and the young man in the smoking-room, she had fixed his attention.

It was the evening after the scene with the captain that he joined her, awkwardly, abruptly, irresistibly, on the deck, where she was pacing to and fro alone, the evening being mild and brilliant and the stars remarkably fine. There were scattered talkers and smokers, and couples, unrecognisable, that moved quickly through the gloom. The vessel dipped, with long, regular pulsations ; vague and spectral, under the stars, with its swaying pinnacles spotted here and there with lights, it seemed to rush through the darkness faster than by day. Vogelstein had come up to walk, and as the girl brushed past him he distinguished Pandora's face (with Mrs. Dangerfield he always spoke of her as Pandora) under the veil that seemed intended to protect it from the sea-damp. He stopped, turned, hurried after her, threw away his cigar, and asked her if she would do him the honour to accept his arm. She declined his arm, but accepted his company, and he walked with her for an hour. They had a great deal of talk, and he remembered afterwards some of the things she said. There was now a certainty of the ship getting into dock the next morning but one, and this prospect afforded an obvious topic. Some of Miss Day's expressions struck

him as singular; but, of course, as he knew, his knowledge of English was not nice enough to give him a perfect measure.

"I am not in a hurry to arrive; I am very happy here," she said. "I'm afraid I shall have such a time putting my people through."

"Putting them through?"

"Through the custom-house. We have made so many purchases. Well, I have written to a friend to come down, and perhaps he can help us. He's very well acquainted with the head. Once I'm chalked, I don't care. I feel like a kind of black-board by this time, any way. We found them awful in Germany."

Vogelstein wondered whether the friend she had written to was her lover, and if she were betrothed to him, especially when she alluded to him again as "that gentleman that is coming down." He asked her about her travels, her impressions, whether she had been long in Europe, and what she liked best; and she told him that they had gone abroad, she and her family, for a little fresh experience. Though he found her very intelligent he suspected she gave this as a reason because he was a German and she had heard that Germans were fond of culture. He wondered what form of culture Mr. and Mrs. Day had brought back from Italy, Greece, and Palestine (they had travelled for two years and been everywhere), especially when their daughter said, "I wanted father and mother to see the best things. I kept them three hours on the Acropolis. I guess they won't forget that!" Perhaps it was of Pheidias and Pericles

they were thinking, Vogelstein reflected, as they sat ruminating in their rugs. Pandora remarked also that she wanted to show her little sister everything while she was young; remarkable sights made so much more impression when the mind was fresh; she had read something of that sort in Goethe, somewhere. She had wanted to come herself when she was her sister's age; but her father was in business then, and they couldn't leave Utica. Vogelstein thought of the little sister frisking over the Parthenon and the Mount of Olives, and sharing for two years, the years of the schoolroom, this extraordinary odyssey of her parents, and wondered whether Goethe's dictum had been justified in this case. He asked Pandora if Utica were the seat of her family; if it were a pleasant place; if it would be an interesting city for him, as a stranger, to see. His companion replied frankly that it was horrid, but added that all the same she would ask him to "come and visit us at our home," if it were not that they should probably soon leave it.

"Ah! You are going to live elsewhere?"

"Well, I am working for New York. I flatter myself I have loosened them while we have been away. They won't find Utica the same; that was my idea. I want a big place, and, of course, Utica——" And the girl broke off, with a little sigh.

"I suppose Utica is small?" Vogelstein suggested.

"Well, no, it's middle-sized. I hate anything middling," said Pandora Day. She gave a light,

dry laugh, tossing back her head a little as she made this declaration. And looking at her askance, in the dusk, as she trod the deck that vaguely swayed, he thought there was something in her air and port that carried out such a spirit.

"What is her social position?" he inquired of Mrs. Dangerfield the next day. "I can't make it out at all, it is so contradictory. She strikes me as having so much cultivation and so much spirit. Her appearance, too, is very neat. Yet her parents are little burghers. That is easily seen."

"Oh, social position!" Mrs. Dangerfield exclaimed, nodding two or three times, rather portentously. "What big expressions you use! Do you think everybody in the world has a social position? That is reserved for an infinitely small minority of mankind. You can't have a social position at Utica, any more than you can have an opera-box. Pandora hasn't got any; where should she have found it? Poor girl, it isn't fair of you to ask such questions as that."

"Well," said Vogelstein, "if she is of the lower class, that seems to be very—very——" And he paused a moment, as he often paused in speaking English, looking for his word.

"Very what, Count Vogelstein?"

"Very significant, very representative."

"Oh, dear, she isn't of the lower class," Mrs. Dangerfield murmured, helplessly.

"What is she, then?"

"Well, I'm bound to admit that since I was at home last she is a novelty. A girl like that, with such people—it's a new type."

"I like novelties," said Count Vogelstein, smiling, with an air of considerable resolution. He could not, however, be satisfied with an explanation that only begged the question; and when they disembarked in New York, he felt, even amid the confusion of wharf and the heaps of disembowelled baggage, a certain acuteness of regret at the idea that Pandora and her family were about to vanish into the unknown. He had a consolation, however: it was apparent that for some reason or other—illness or absence from town—the gentleman to whom she had written had not, as she said, come down. Vogelstein was glad—he couldn't have told you why—that this sympathetic person had failed her; even though without him Pandora had to engage single-handed with the United States custom-house. Vogelstein's first impression of the western world was received on the landing-place of the German steamers, at Jersey City—a huge wooden shed, covering a wooden wharf which resounded under the feet, palisaded with rough-hewn, slanting piles, and bestrewn with masses of heterogeneous luggage. At one end, towards the town, was a row of tall, painted palings, behind which he could distinguish a press of hackney-coachmen, brandishing their whips and awaiting their victims, while their voices rose, incessant, with a sharp, strange sound, at once fierce and familiar. The whole place, behind the fence, appeared to bristle and resound. Out there was America, Vogelstein said to himself, and he looked towards it with a sense that he ought to muster resolution. On the wharf people were rushing

about amid their trunks, pulling their things together, trying to unite their scattered parcels. They were heated and angry, or else quite bewildered and discouraged. The few that had succeeded in collecting their battered boxes had an air of flushed indifference to the efforts of their neighbours, not even looking at people with whom they had been intimate on the steamer. A detachment of the officers of the customs was in attendance, and energetic passengers were engaged in attempts to draw them towards their luggage or to drag heavy pieces towards them. These functionaries were good-natured and taciturn, except when occasionally they remarked to a passenger whose open trunk stared up at them, imploring, that they were afraid the voyage had had a good deal of sameness. They had a friendly, leisurely, speculative way of performing their office, and if they perceived a victim's name written on the portmanteau, they addressed him by it, in a tone of old acquaintance. Vogelstein found, however, that if they were familiar, they were not indiscreet. He had heard that in America all public functionaries were the same, that there was not a different *tenue*, as they said in France, for different positions; and he wondered whether at Washington the President and ministers, whom he expected to see, would be like that.

He was diverted from these speculations by the sight of Mr. and Mrs. Day, who were seated side by side upon a trunk, encompassed, apparently, by the accumulations of their tour. Their faces expressed more consciousness of surrounding

objects than he had hitherto perceived, and there was an air of placid expansion in the mysterious couple which suggested that this consciousness was agreeable. Mr. and Mrs. Day, as they would have said, were glad to get back. At a little distance, on the edge of the dock, Vogelstein remarked their son, who had found a place where, between the sides of two big ships, he could see the ferry-boats pass; the large, pyramidal, low-laden ferry-boats of American waters. He stood there, patient and considering, with his small neat foot on a coil of rope, his back to everything that had been disembarked, his neck elongated in its polished cylinder, while the fragrance of his big cigar mingled with the odour of the rotting piles, and his little sister, beside him, hugged a huge post and tried to see how far she could crane over the water without falling in. Vogelstein's servant, an Englishman (he had taken him for practice in the language), had gone in pursuit of an examiner; he had got his things together and was waiting to be released, fully expecting that for a person of his importance the ceremony would be brief. Before it began he said a word to young Mr. Day, taking off his hat at the same time to the little girl, whom he had not yet greeted, and who dodged his salute by swinging herself boldly outwards, to the dangerous side of the pier. She was not much "formed" yet, but she was evidently as light as a feather.

"I see you are kept waiting, like me. It is very tiresome," Count Vogelstein said.

The young man answered without looking be-

hind him. "As soon as we begin we shall go straight. My sister has written to a gentleman to come down."

"I have looked for Miss Day to bid her good-bye," Vogelstein went on; "but I don't see her."

"I guess she has gone to meet that gentleman; he's a great friend of hers."

"I presume he's her lover!" the little girl broke out. "She was always writing to him, in Europe."

Her brother puffed his cigar in silence for a moment. "That was only for this. I'll tell on you," he presently added.

But the younger Miss Day gave no heed to his announcement; she addressed herself to Vogelstein. "This is New York; I like it better than Utica."

Vogelstein had no time to reply, for his servant had arrived with one of the emissaries of the customs; but as he turned away he wondered, in the light of the child's preference, about the towns of the interior. He was very well treated. The officer who took him in hand, and who had a large straw hat and a diamond breastpin, was quite a man of the world, and in reply to the formal declarations of the Count only said, "Well, I guess it's all right; I guess I'll just pass you;" and he distributed, freely, a dozen chalk-marks. The servant had unlocked and unbuckled various pieces, and while he was closing them the officer stood there wiping his forehead and conversing with Vogelstein. "First visit to our country, Count?—quite alone—no ladies? Of course

the ladies are what we are after." It was in this manner he expressed himself, while the young diplomatist wondered what he was waiting for, and whether he ought to slip something into his palm. But Vogelstein's visitor left him only a moment in suspense; he presently turned away, with the remark, very quietly uttered, that he hoped the Count would make quite a stay; upon which the young man saw how wrong he should have been to offer him a tip. It was simply the American manner, and it was very amicable, after all. Vogelstein's servant had secured a porter, with a truck, and he was about to leave the place when he saw Pandora Day dart out of the crowd and address herself, with much eagerness, to the functionary who had just liberated him. She had an open letter in her hand, which she gave him to read, and he cast his eyes over it, deliberately, stroking his beard. Then she led him away to where her parents sat upon their luggage. Vogelstein sent off his servant with the porter, and followed Pandora, to whom he really wished to say a word in farewell. The last thing they had said to each other on the ship was that they should meet again on shore. It seemed improbable, however, that the meeting would occur anywhere but just here on the dock; inasmuch as Pandora was decidedly not in society, where Vogelstein would be, of course, and as, if Utica was not—he had her sharp little sister's word for it—as agreeable as what was about him there, he would be hanged if he would go to Utica. He overtook Pandora quickly; she was in the act

of introducing the customs-officer to her parents, quite in the same manner in which she had introduced the captain of the steamer. Mr. and Mrs. Day got up and shook hands with him, and they evidently all prepared to have a little talk. "I should like to introduce you to my brother and sister," he heard the girl say; and he saw her look about her for these appendages. He caught her eye as she did so, and advanced, with his hand outstretched, reflecting the while that evidently the Americans, whom he had always heard described as silent and practical, were not unversed in certain social arts. They dawdled and chattered like so many Neapolitans.

"Good-bye, Count Vogelstein," said Pandora, who was a little flushed with her various exertions, but did not look the worse for it. "I hope you'll have a splendid time, and appreciate our country."

"I hope you'll get through all right," Vogelstein answered, smiling and feeling himself already more idiomatic.

"That gentleman is sick that I wrote to," she rejoined; "isn't it too bad? But he sent me down a letter to a friend of his, one of the examiners, and I guess we won't have any trouble. Mr. Lansing, let me make you acquainted with Count Vogelstein," she went on, presenting to her fellow-passenger the wearer of the straw hat and the breast-pin, who shook hands with the young German as if he had never seen him before. Vogelstein's heart rose for an instant to his throat. He thanked his stars that he had not offered a tip to the friend of a gentleman who had often been

mentioned to him, and who had been described by a member of Pandora's family as her lover.

"It's a case of ladies this time," Mr. Lansing remarked to Vogelstein, with a smile which seemed to confess, surreptitiously, and as if neither party could be eager, to recognition.

"Well, Mr. Bellamy says you'll do anything for *him*," Pandora said, smiling very sweetly at Mr. Lansing. "We haven't got much; we have been gone only two years."

Mr. Lansing scratched his head a little, behind, with a movement which sent his straw hat forward in the direction of his nose. "I don't know as I would do anything for him that I wouldn't do for you," he responded, returning the smile of the girl. "I guess you had better open that one." And he gave a little affectionate kick to one of the trunks.

"Oh, mother, isn't he lovely! It's only your sea-things," Pandora cried, stooping over the coffer instantly, with the key in her hand.

"I don't know as I like showing them," Mrs. Day murmured, modestly.

Vogelstein made his German salutation to the company in general, and to Pandora he offered an audible good-bye, which she returned in a bright, friendly voice, but without looking round, as she fumbled at the lock of her trunk.

"We'll try another, if you like," said Mr. Lansing, laughing.

"Oh no, it has got to be this one! Good-bye, Count Vogelstein. I hope you'll judge us correctly!"

The young man went his way and passed the

barrier of the dock. Here he was met by his servant, with a face of consternation which led him to ask whether a cab were not forthcoming.

"They call 'em 'acks 'ere, sir," said the man, "and they're beyond everything. He wants thirty shillings to take you to the inn."

Vogelstein hesitated a moment. "Couldn't you find a German?"

"By the way he talks he *is* a German!" said the man; and in a moment Count Vogelstein began his career in America by discussing the tariff of hackney-coaches in the language of the fatherland.

II.

VOGELSTEIN went wherever he was asked, on principle, partly to study American society, and partly because, in Washington, pastimes seemed to him not so numerous that one could afford to neglect occasions. Of course, at the end of two winters he had a good many of various kinds, and his study of American society had yielded considerable fruit. When, however, in April, during the second year of his residence, he presented himself at a large party given by Mrs. Bonnycastle, and of which it was believed that it would be the last serious affair of the season, his being there (and still more his looking very fresh and talkative) was not the consequence of a rule of conduct. He went to Mrs. Bonnycastle's simply because he liked the lady, whose receptions were the pleasantest in Washington, and because if he didn't go there he didn't know what he should

do. That absence of alternatives had become rather familiar to him in Washington—there were a great many things he did because if he didn't do them he didn't know what he should do. It must be added that in this case, even if there had been an alternative, he would still have decided to go to Mrs. Bonnycastle's. If her house was not the pleasantest there, it was at least difficult to say which was pleasanter; and the complaint sometimes made of it that it was too limited, that it left out, on the whole, more people than it took in, applied with much less force when it was thrown open for a general party. Towards the end of the social year, in those soft, scented days of the Washington spring, when the air began to show a southern glow, and the little squares and circles (to which the wide, empty avenues converged according to a plan so ingenious, yet so bewildering) to flush with pink blossom and to make one wish to sit on benches—at this period of expansion and condonation Mrs. Bonnycastle, who during the winter had been a good deal on the defensive, relaxed her vigilance a little, became humorously inconsistent, vernally reckless, as it were, and ceased to calculate the consequences of an hospitality which a reference to the back-files—or even to the morning's issue—of newspapers might easily show to be a mistake. But Washington life, to Vogelstein's apprehension, was paved with mistakes; he felt himself to be in a society which was founded on necessary lapses. Little addicted as he was to the sportive view of existence, he had said to himself, at an

early stage of his sojourn, that the only way to enjoy the United States would be to burn one's standards and warm one's self at the blaze. Such were the reflections of a theoretic Teuton, who now walked for the most part amid the ashes of his prejudices. Mrs. Bonnycastle had endeavoured more than once to explain to him the principles on which she received certain people and ignored certain others; but it was with difficulty that he entered into her discriminations. She perceived differences where he only saw resemblances, and both the merits and defects of a good many members of Washington society, as that society was interpreted to him by Mrs. Bonnycastle, he was often at a loss to understand. Fortunately she had a fund of good humour which, as I have intimated, was apt to come uppermost with the April blossoms, and which made the people she did not invite to her house almost as amusing to her as those she did. Her husband was not in politics, though politics were much in him; but the couple had taken upon themselves the responsibilities of an active patriotism; they thought it right to live in America, differing therein from a great many of their acquaintance, who only thought it expensive. They had that burdensome heritage of foreign reminiscence with which so many Americans are saddled; but they carried it more easily than most of their country-people, and you knew they had lived in Europe only by their present exultation, never in the least by their regrets. Their regrets, that is, were only for their ever having lived there, as

Mrs. Bonnycastle once told the wife of a foreign minister. They solved all their problems successfully, including those of knowing none of the people they did not wish to, and of finding plenty of occupation in a society supposed to be meagrely provided with resources for persons of leisure. When, as the warm weather approached, they opened both the wings of their door, it was because they thought it would entertain them, and not because they were conscious of a pressure. Alfred Bonnycastle, all winter indeed, chafed a little at the definiteness of some of his wife's reserves; he thought that, for Washington, their society was really a little too good. Vogelstein still remembered the puzzled feeling (it had cleared up somewhat now) with which, more than a year before, he had heard Mr. Bonnycastle exclaim one evening, after a dinner in his own house, when every guest but the German secretary, who often sat late with the pair, had departed, "Hang it, there is only a month left; let us have some fun—let us invite the President!"

This was Mrs. Bonnycastle's carnival, and on the occasion to which I began my little chapter by referring, the President had not only been invited but had signified his intention of being present. I hasten to add that this was not the same functionary to whom Alfred Bonnycastle's irreverent allusion had been made. The White House had received a new tenant (the old one, then, was just leaving it), and Otto Vogelstein had had the advantage, during the first eighteen months of his stay in America, of seeing an

electoral campaign, a presidential inauguration, and a distribution of spoils. He had been bewildered, during those first weeks, by finding that in the national capital, in the houses that he supposed to be the best, the head of the State was not a coveted guest; for this could be the only explanation of Mr. Bonnycastle's whimsical proposal to invite him, as it were, in carnival. His successor went out a good deal, for a President.

The legislative session was over, but this made little difference in the aspect of Mrs. Bonnycastle's rooms, which, even at the height of the congressional season, could not be said to overflow with the representatives of the people. They were garnished with an occasional senator, whose movements and utterances often appeared to be regarded with a mixture of alarm and indulgence, as if they would be disappointing if they were not rather odd, and yet might be dangerous if they were not carefully watched. Vogelstein had grown to have a kindness for these conscript fathers of invisible families, who had something of the toga in the voluminous folds of their conversation, but were otherwise rather bare and bald, with stony wrinkles in their faces, like busts and statues of ancient law-givers. There seemed to him something chill and exposed in their being at once so exalted and so naked; there were lonesome glances in their eyes, sometimes, as if in the social world their legislative consciousness longed for the warmth of a few comfortable laws ready-made. Members of the House were very rare, and when Washington was new to Vogelstein

he used sometimes to mistake them, in the hall and on the staircases where he met them, for the functionaries engaged for the evening to usher in guests and wait at supper. It was only a little later that he perceived these functionaries were almost always impressive, and had a complexion which served as a livery. At present, however, such misleading figures were much less to be encountered than during the months of winter, and, indeed, they never were to be encountered at Mrs. Bonnycastle's. At present the social vistas of Washington, like the vast fresh flatness of the lettered and numbered streets, which at this season seemed to Vogelstein more spacious and vague than ever, suggested but a paucity of political phenomena. Count Otto, that evening, knew every one, or almost every one. There were very often inquiring strangers, expecting great things, from New York and Boston, and to them, in the friendly Washington way, the young German was promptly introduced. It was a society in which familiarity reigned, and in which people were liable to meet three times a day, so that their ultimate essence became a matter of importance.

"I have got three new girls," Mrs. Bonnycastle said. "You must talk to them all."

"All at once?" Vogelstein asked, reversing in imagination a position which was not unknown to him. He had often, in Washington, been discoursed to at the same moment by several virginal voices.

"Oh no; you must have something different for

each; you can't get off that way. Haven't you discovered that the American girl expects something especially adapted to herself? It's very well in Europe to have a few phrases that will do for any girl. The American girl isn't any girl; she's a remarkable individual in a remarkable genus. But you must keep the best this evening for Miss Day."

"For Miss Day!" Vogelstein exclaimed, staring. "Do you mean Pandora?"

Mrs. Bonnycastle stared a moment, in return; then laughed very hard. "One would think you had been looking for her over the globe! So you know her already, and you call her by her pet name?"

"Oh no, I don't know her; that is, I haven't seen her, nor thought of her, from that day to this. We came to America in the same ship."

"Isn't she an American, then?"

"Oh yes; she lives at Utica, in the interior."

"In the interior of Utica? You can't mean my young woman then, who lives in New York, where she is a great beauty and a great success, and has been immensely admired this winter."

"After all," said Vogelstein, reflecting and a little disappointed, "the name is not so uncommon; it is perhaps another. But has she rather strange eyes, a little yellow, but very pretty, and a nose a little arched?"

"I can't tell you all that; I haven't seen her. She is staying with Mrs. Steuben. She only came a day or two ago, and Mrs. Steuben is to bring her. When she wrote to me to ask leave she

told me what I tell you. They haven't come yet."

Vogelstein felt a quick hope that the subject of this correspondence might indeed be the young lady he had parted from on the dock at New York, but the indications seemed to point the other way, and he had no wish to cherish an illusion. It did not seem to him probable that the energetic girl who had introduced him to Mr. Lansing would have the entrée of the best house in Washington; besides, Mrs. Bonnycastle's guest was described as a beauty and as belonging to the brilliant city.

"What is the social position of Mrs. Steuben?" it occurred to him to ask in a moment, as he meditated. He had an earnest, artless, literal way of uttering such a question as that; you could see from it that he was very thorough.

Mrs. Bonnycastle broke into mocking laughter. "I am sure I don't know! What is your own?" And she left him, to turn to her other guests, to several of whom she repeated his question. Could they tell her what was the social position of Mrs. Steuben? There was Count Vogelstein, who wanted to know. He instantly became aware, of course, that he ought not to have made such an inquiry. Was not the lady's place in the scale sufficiently indicated by Mrs. Bonnycastle's acquaintance with her? Still, there were fine degrees, and he felt a little unduly snubbed. It was perfectly true, as he told his hostess, that, with the quick wave of new impressions that had rolled over him after his arrival in America, the

image of Pandora was almost completely effaced; he had seen a great many things which were quite as remarkable in their way as the daughter of the Days. But at the touch of the idea that he might see her again at any moment she became as vivid in his mind as if they had parted but the day before; he remembered the exact shade of the eyes he had described to Mrs. Bonnycastle as yellow; the tone of her voice when, at the last, she expressed the hope that he would judge America correctly. Had he judged it correctly? If he were to meet her again she doubtless would try to ascertain. It would be going much too far to say that the idea of such an ordeal was terrible to Otto Vogelstein; but it may at least be said that the thought of meeting Pandora Day made him nervous. The fact is certainly singular, but I shall not take upon myself to explain it; there are some things that even the most philosophic historian is not bound to account for.

He wandered into another room, and there, at the end of five minutes, he was introduced by Mrs. Bonnycastle to one of the young ladies of whom she had spoken. This was a very intelligent girl, who came from Boston, showing much acquaintance with Spielhagen's novels. "Do you like them?" Vogelstein asked, rather vaguely, not taking much interest in the matter, as he read works of fiction only in case of a sea-voyage. The young lady from Boston looked pensive and concentrated; then she answered that she liked some of them, but that there were others she did not like, and she enumerated the works that came

under each of these heads. Spielhagen is a voluminous writer, and such a catalogue took some time; at the end of it, moreover, Vogelstein's question was not answered, for he could not have told you whether she liked Spielhagen or not. On the next topic, however, there was no doubt about her feelings. They talked about Washington as people talk only in the place itself, revolving about the subject in widening and narrowing circles, perching successively on its many branches, considering it from every point of view. Vogelstein had been long enough in America to discover that, after half a century of social neglect, Washington had become the fashion, possessed the great advantage of being a new resource in conversation. This was especially the case in the months of spring, when the inhabitants of the commercial cities came so far southward to escape that boisterous interlude. They were all agreed that Washington was fascinating, and none of them were better prepared to talk it over than the Bostonians. Vogelstein originally had been rather out of step with them; he had not seized their point of view, had not known with what they compared this object of their infatuation. But now he knew everything; he had settled down to the pace; there was not a possible phase of the discussion which could find him at a loss. There was a kind of Hegelian element in it; in the light of these considerations the American capital took on the semblance of a monstrous, mystical *Werden*. But they fatigued Vogelstein a little, and it was his preference, as a general thing, not to engage

the same evening with more than one new-comer, one visitor in the freshness of initiation. This was why Mrs. Bonnycastle's expression of a wish to introduce him to three young ladies had startled him a little; he saw a certain process, in which he flattered himself that he had become proficient, but which was after all tolerably exhausting, repeated for each of the damsels. After separating from his bright Bostonian he rather evaded Mrs. Bonnycastle, and contented himself with the conversation of old friends, pitched, for the most part, in a lower and more sceptical key.

At last he heard it mentioned that the President had arrived, had been some half-an-hour in the house, and he went in search of the illustrious guest, whose whereabouts at Washington parties was not indicated by a cluster of courtiers. He made it a point, whenever he found himself in company with the President, to pay him his respects; and he had not been discouraged by the fact that there was no association of ideas in the eye of the great man as he put out his hand, presidentially, and said, "Happy to see you, sir." Vogelstein felt himself taken for a mere constituent, possibly for an office-seeker; and he used to reflect at such moments that the monarchical form had its merits: it provided a line of heredity for the faculty of quick recognition. He had now some difficulty in finding the chief magistrate, and ended by learning that he was in the tea-room, a small apartment devoted to light refection, near the entrance of the house. Here Vogelstein presently perceived him, seated on a sofa, in

conversation with a lady. There were a number of people about the table, eating, drinking, talking; and the couple on the sofa, which was not near it, but against the wall, in a kind of recess, looked a little withdrawn, as if they had sought seclusion and were disposed to profit by the diverted attention of the others. The President leaned back; his gloved hands, resting on either knee, made large white spots. He looked eminent, but he looked relaxed, and the lady beside him was making him laugh. Vogelstein caught her voice as he approached—he heard her say, "Well, now, remember; I consider it a promise." She was very prettily dressed, in rose-colour; her hands were clasped in her lap, and her eyes were attached to the presidential profile.

"Well, madam, in that case it's about the fiftieth promise I have given to-day."

It was just as he heard these words, uttered by her companion in reply, that Vogelstein checked himself, turned away, and pretended to be looking for a cup of tea. It was not customary to disturb the President, even simply to shake hands, when he was sitting on a sofa with a lady, and Vogelstein felt it in this case to be less possible than ever to break the rule, for the lady on the sofa was none other than Pandora Day. He had recognised her without her appearing to see him, and even in his momentary look he had perceived that she was now a person to be reckoned with. She had an air of elation, of success; she looked brilliant in her rose-coloured dress; she was extracting promises from the ruler of fifty millions

of people. What an odd place to meet her, Vogelstein thought, and how little one could tell, after all, in America, who people were! He didn't wish to speak to her yet; he wished to wait a little, and learn more; but, meanwhile, there was something attractive in the thought that she was just behind him, a few yards off, that if he should turn he might see her again. It was she whom Mrs. Bonnycastle had meant; it was she who was so much admired in New York. Her face was the same, yet Vogelstein had seen in a moment that she was vaguely prettier; he had recognised the arch of her nose, which suggested ambition. He took two ices, which he did not want, in order not to go away. He remembered her *entourage* on the steamer: her father and mother, the silent burghers, so little "of the world," her infant sister, so much of it, her humorous brother, with his tall hat and his influence in the smoking-room. He remembered Mrs. Dangerfield's warnings—yet her perplexities too, and the letter from Mr. Bellamy, and the introduction to Mr. Lansing, and the way Pandora had stooped down on the dirty dock, laughing and talking, mistress of the situation, to open her trunk for the customs. He was pretty sure that she had paid no duties that day; that had been the purpose, of course, of Mr. Bellamy's letter. Was she still in correspondence with this gentleman, and had he recovered from his sickness? All this passed through Vogelstein's mind, and he saw that it was quite in Pandora's line to be mistress of the situation, for there was nothing,

evidently, on the present occasion that could call itself her master. He drank his tea, and as he put down his cup he heard the President, behind him, say, "Well, I guess my wife will wonder why I don't come home."

"Why didn't you bring her with you?" Pandora asked.

"Well, she doesn't go out much. Then she has got her sister staying with her—Mrs. Runkle, from Natchez. She's a good deal of an invalid, and my wife doesn't like to leave her."

"She must be a very kind woman," Pandora remarked, sympathetically.

"Well, I guess she isn't spoiled yet."

"I should like very much to come and see her," said Pandora.

"Do come round. Couldn't you come some night?" the President responded.

"Well, I will come some time. And I shall remind you of your promise."

"All right. There's nothing like keeping it up. Well," said the President, "I must bid good-bye to these kind folks.'

Vogelstein heard him rise from the sofa, with his companion, and he gave the pair time to pass out of the room before him, which they did with a certain impressive deliberation, people making way for the ruler of fifty millions and looking with a certain curiosity at the striking pink person at his side. When, after a few moments, Vogelstein followed them across the hall, into one of the other rooms, he saw the hostess accompany the President to the door, and two foreign ministers

and a judge of the Supreme Court address themselves to Pandora Day. He resisted the impulse to join this circle; if he spoke to her at all he wished to speak to her alone. She continued, nevertheless, to occupy him, and when Mrs. Bonnycastle came back from the hall he immediately approached her with an appeal. "I wish you would tell me something more about that girl—that one, opposite, in pink?"

"The lovely Day—that is what they call her, I believe? I wanted you to talk with her."

"I find she is the one I have met. But she seems to be so different here. I can't make it out."

There was something in his expression which provoked Mrs. Bonnycastle to mirth. "How we do puzzle you Europeans; you look quite bewildered!"

"I am sorry I look so; I try to hide it. But, of course, we are very simple. Let me ask, then, a simple question. Are her parents also in society?"

"Parents in society! D'où tombez-vous? Did you ever hear of a girl—in rose-colour—whose parents were in society?"

"Is she, then, all alone?" Count Vogelstein inquired, with a strain of melancholy in his voice.

Mrs. Bonnycastle stared at him a moment, with her laughter in her face. "You are too pathetic. Don't you know what she is? I supposed, of course, you knew."

"It's exactly what I am asking you."

"Why, she's the new type. It has only come up lately. They have had articles about it in the papers. That's the reason I told Mrs. Steuben to bring her."

"The new type? What new type, Mrs. Bonnycastle?" said Vogelstein, pleadingly, and conscious that all types in America were new.

Her laughter checked her reply for a moment, and by the time she had recovered herself the young lady from Boston, with whom Vogelstein had been talking, stood there to take leave. This, for an American type, was an old one, he was sure; and the process of parting between the guest and her hostess had an ancient elaboration. Vogelstein waited a little; then he turned away and walked up to Pandora Day, whose group of interlocutors had now been reinforced by a gentleman that had held an important place in the cabinet of the late occupant of the presidential chair. Vogelstein had asked Mrs. Bonnycastle if she were "all alone;" but there was nothing in Pandora's present situation that suggested isolation. She was not sufficiently alone for Vogelstein's taste; but he was impatient, and he hoped she would give him a few words to himself. She recognised him without a moment's hesitation, and with the sweetest smile, a smile that matched the tone in which she said, "I was watching you; I wondered whether you were not going to speak to me."

"Miss Day was watching him," one of the foreign ministers exclaimed, "and we flattered ourselves that her attention was all with us!"

"I mean before," said the girl, "while I was talking with the President."

At this the gentlemen began to laugh, and one of them remarked that that was the way the absent were sacrificed, even the great; while another said that he hoped Vogelstein was duly flattered.

"Oh, I was watching the President too," said Pandora. "I have got to watch *him*. He has promised me something."

"It must be the mission to England," the judge of the Supreme Court suggested. "A good position for a lady; they have got a lady at the head, over there."

"I wish they would send you to my country," one of the foreign ministers suggested. "I would immediately get recalled."

"Why, perhaps in your country I wouldn't speak to you! It's only because you are here," the girl returned, with a gay familiarity which with her was evidently but one of the arts of defence. "You'll see what mission it is when it comes out. But I will speak to Count Vogelstein anywhere," she went on. "He is an older friend than any one here. I have known him in difficult days."

"Oh yes, on the ocean," said the young man, smiling. "On the watery waste, in the tempest!"

"Oh, I don't mean that so much; we had a beautiful voyage, and there wasn't any tempest. I mean when I was living in Utica. That's a watery waste, if you like, and a tempest there would have been a pleasant variety."

"Your parents seemed to me so peaceful!" Vogelstein exclaimed, with a vague wish to say something sympathetic.

"Oh, you haven't seen them on shore. At Utica they were very lively. But that is no longer our home. Don't you remember I told you I was working for New York? Well, I worked—I had to work hard. But we have moved."

"And I hope they are happy," said Vogelstein.

"My father and mother? Oh, they will be, in time. I must give them time. They are very young yet; they have years before them. And you have been always in Washington?" Pandora continued. "I suppose you have found out everything about everything."

"Oh no; there are some things I can't find out."

"Come and see me, and perhaps I can help you. I am very different from what I was on the ship. I have advanced a great deal since then."

"Oh, how was Miss Day on the ship?" asked the cabinet minister of the last administration.

"She was delightful, of course," said Vogelstein.

"He is very flattering; I didn't open my mouth!" Pandora cried. "Here comes Mrs. Steuben to take me to some other place. I believe it's a literary party, near the Capitol. Everything seems so separate in Washington. Mrs. Steuben is going to read a poem. I wish she would read it here; wouldn't it do as well?"

This lady, arriving, signified to Pandora the

necessity of their moving on. But Miss Day's companions had various things to say to her before giving her up. She had an answer for each of them, and it was brought home to Vogelstein, as he listened, that, as she said, she had advanced a great deal. Daughter of small burghers as she was, she was really brilliant. Vogelstein turned away a little, and, while Mrs. Steuben waited, asked her a question. He had made her, half an hour before, the subject of that inquiry to which Mrs. Bonnycastle returned so ambiguous an answer ; but this was not because he had not some direct acquaintance with Mrs. Steuben, as well as a general idea of the esteem in which she was held. He had met her in various places, and he had been at her house. She was the widow of a commodore—a handsome, mild, soft, swaying woman, whom every one liked, with glossy bands of black hair and a little ringlet depending behind each ear. Some one had said that she looked like the Queen in *Hamlet*. She had written verses which were admired in the South, wore a full-length portrait of the commodore on her bosom, and spoke with the accent of Savannah. She had about her a positive odour of Washington. It had certainly been very crude in Vogelstein to question Mrs. Bonnycastle about her social position.

"Do kindly tell me," he said, lowering his voice, "what is the type to which that young lady belongs. Mrs. Bonnycastle tells me it's a new one."

Mrs. Steuben for a moment fixed her liquid eyes upon the secretary of legation. She always

seemed to be translating the prose of your speech into the finer rhythms with which her own mind was familiar. "Do you think anything is really new?" she asked. "I am very fond of the old; you know that is a weakness of we Southerners." The poor lady, it will be observed, had another weakness as well. "What we often take to be the new is simply the old under some novel form. Were there not remarkable natures in the past? If you doubt it you should visit the South, where the past still lingers."

Vogelstein had been struck before this with Mrs. Steuben's pronunciation of the word by which her native latitudes were designated: transcribing it from her lips, you would have written it (as the nearest approach) the Sooth. But, at present, he scarcely observed this peculiarity; he was wondering, rather, how a woman could be at once so copious and so unsatisfactory. What did he care about the past, or even about the Sooth? He was afraid of starting her again. He looked at her, discouraged and helpless, as bewildered almost as Mrs. Bonnycastle had found him half an hour before; looked also at the commodore, who, on her bosom, seemed to breathe again with his widow's respirations. "Call it an old type, then, if you like," he said in a moment. "All I want to know is *what* type it is! It seems impossible to find out."

"You can find out by the newspapers. They have had articles about it. They write about everything now. But it isn't true about Miss Day. It is one of the first families. Her great-

grandfather was in the Revolution." Pandora by this time had given her attention again to Mrs. Steuben. She seemed to signify that she was ready to move on. "Wasn't your great-grandfather in the Revolution?" Mrs. Steuben asked. "I am telling Count Vogelstein about him."

"Why are you asking about my ancestors?" the girl demanded, smiling, of the young German. "Is that the thing that you said just now that you can't find out? Well, if Mrs. Steuben will only be quiet you never will."

Mrs. Steuben shook her head, rather dreamily. "Well, it's no trouble for a Southerner to be quiet. There's a kind of languor in our blood. Besides, we have to be, to-day. But I have got to show some energy to-night. I have got to get you to the end of Pennsylvania Avenue."

Pandora gave her hand to Count Vogelstein, and asked him if he thought they should meet again. He answered that in Washington people were always meeting, and that at any rate he should not fail to come and see her. Hereupon, just as the two ladies were detaching themselves, Mrs. Steuben remarked that if Count Vogelstein and Miss Day wished to meet again the picnic would be a good chance—the picnic that she was getting up for the following Thursday. It was to consist of about twenty bright people, and they would go down the Potomac to Mount Vernon. Vogelstein answered that, if Mrs. Steuben thought him bright enough, he should be delighted to join the party; and he was told the hour for which the tryst was taken.

He remained at Mrs. Bonnycastle's after every one had gone, and then he informed this lady of his reason for waiting. Would she have mercy on him and let him know, in a single word, before he went to rest—for without it rest would be impossible—what was this famous type to which Pandora Day belonged?

"Gracious, you don't mean to say you have not found out that type yet!" Mrs. Bonnycastle exclaimed, with a return of her hilarity. "What have you been doing all the evening? You Germans may be thorough, but you certainly are not quick!"

It was Alfred Bonnycastle who at last took pity on him. "My dear Vogelstein, she is the latest, freshest fruit of our great American evolution. She is the self-made girl!"

Vogelstein gazed a moment. "The fruit of the great American Revolution? Yes, Mrs. Steuben told me her great-grandfather——" But the rest of his sentence was lost in the explosion of Mrs. Bonnycastle's mirth. He bravely continued his interrogation, however, and, desiring his host's definition to be defined, inquired what the self-made girl might be.

"Sit down, and we'll tell you all about it," Mrs. Bonnycastle said. "I like talking this way after a party's over. You can smoke, if you like, and Alfred will open another window. Well, to begin with, the self-made girl is a new feature. That, however, you know. In the second place, she isn't self-made at all. We all help to make her, we take such an interest in her."

"That's only after she is made!" Alfred Bonnycastle broke in. "But it's Vogelstein that takes an interest. What on earth has started you up so on the subject of Miss Day?"

Vogelstein explained, as well as he could, that it was merely the accident of his having crossed the ocean in the steamer with her; but he felt the inadequacy of this account of the matter, felt it more than his hosts, who could know neither how little actual contact he had had with her on the ship, how much he had been affected by Mrs. Dangerfield's warnings, nor how much observation at the same time he had lavished on her. He sat there half an hour, and the warm, dead stillness of the Washington night—nowhere are the nights so silent—came in at the open windows, mingled with a soft, sweet, earthy smell—the smell of growing things. Before he went away he had heard all about the self-made girl, and there was something in the picture that almost inspired him. She was possible, doubtless, only in America; American life had smoothed the way for her. She was not fast nor emancipated nor crude nor loud, and there was not in her, of necessity at least, a grain of the stuff of which the adventuress is made. She was simply very successful, and her success was entirely personal. She had not been born with the silver spoon of social opportunity; she had grasped it by honest exertion. You knew her by many different signs, but chiefly, infallibly, by the appearance of her parents. It was her parents that told the story; you always saw that her parents could never have made her.

Her attitude with regard to them might vary, in innumerable ways; the great fact on her own side being that she had lifted herself from a lower social plane, done it all herself, and done it by the simple lever of her personality. In this view, of course, it was to be expected that she should leave the authors of her being in the shade. Sometimes she had them in her wake, lost in the bubbles and the foam that showed where she had passed; sometimes, as Alfred Bonnycastle said, she let them slide; sometimes she kept them in close confinement; sometimes she exhibited them to the public in discreet glimpses, in prearranged attitudes. But the general characteristic of the self-made girl was that, though it was frequently understood that she was privately devoted to her kindred, she never attempted to impose them on society, and it was striking that she was much better than they. They were almost always solemn and portentous, and they were for the most part of a deathly respectability. She was not necessarily snobbish, unless it was snobbish to want the best. She didn't cringe, she didn't make herself smaller than she was; on the contrary, she took a stand of her own, and attracted things to herself. Naturally, she was possible only in America, only in a country where certain competitions were absent. The natural history of this interesting creature was at last completely exhibited to Vogelstein, who, as he sat there in the animated stillness, with the fragrant wreath of the western world in his nostrils, was convinced of what he had already suspected, that

conversation in the United States is much more psychological than elsewhere. Another thing, as he learned, that you knew the self-made girl by was her culture, which was perhaps a little too obvious. She had usually got into society more or less by reading, and her conversation was apt to be garnished with literary allusions, even with sudden quotations. Vogelstein had not had time to observe this element in a developed form in Pandora Day; but Alfred Bonnycastle said that he wouldn't trust her to keep it under in a *tête-à-tête*. It was needless to say that these young persons had always been to Europe; that was usually the first thing they did. By this means they sometimes got into society in foreign lands before they did so at home; it was to be added, on the other hand, that this resource was less and less valuable; for Europe, in the United States, had less and less prestige, and people in the latter country now kept a watch on that roundabout road. All this applied perfectly to Pandora Day—the journey to Europe, the culture (as exemplified in the books she read on the ship), the effacement of the family. The only thing that was exceptional was the rapidity with which she had advanced; for the jump she had taken since he left her in the hands of Mr. Lansing struck Vogelstein, even after he had made all allowance for the abnormal homogeneity of American society, as really considerable. It took all her cleverness to account for it. When she moved her family from Utica, the battle appeared virtually to have been gained.

Vogelstein called on her the next day, and Mrs. Steuben's blackamoor informed him, in the communicative manner of his race, that the ladies had gone out to pay some visits and look at the Capitol. Pandora apparently had not hitherto examined this monument, and the young man wished he had known the evening before of her omission, so that he might have offered to be her initiator. There is too obvious a connection for me to attempt to conceal it between his regret and the fact that in leaving Mrs. Steuben's door he reminded himself that he wanted a good walk, and took his way along Pennsylvania Avenue. His walk had become fairly good by the time he reached the great white edifice which unfolds its repeated colonnades and uplifts its isolated dome at the end of a long vista of saloons and tobacco-shops. He slowly climbed the great steps, hesitating a little, and wondering why he had come there. The superficial reason was obvious enough, but there was a real one behind it which seemed to Vogelstein rather wanting in the solidity that should characterise the motives of an emissary of Prince Bismarck. The superficial reason was a belief that Mrs. Steuben would pay her visit first—it was probably only a question of leaving cards—and bring her young friend to the Capitol at the hour when the yellow afternoon light gives a tone to the blankness of its marble walls. The Capitol was a splendid building, but it was rather wanting in tone. Vogelstein's curiosity about Pandora Day had been much more quickened than checked by the revelations

made to him in Mrs. Bonnycastle's drawing-room. It was a relief to see the young lady classified; but he had a desire, of which he had not been conscious before, to judge really to the end how well a girl could make herself. His calculations had been just, and he had wandered about the rotunda for only ten minutes, looking again at the paintings, commemorative of national history, which occupy its panels, and at the simulated sculptures, so touchingly characteristic of early American taste, which adorn its upper reaches, when the charming women he had hoped for presented themselves in charge of a licensed guide. He went to meet them, and did not conceal from them that he had marked them for his own. The encounter was happy on both sides, and he accompanied them through the queer and endless interior, through labyrinths of white, bare passages, into legislative and judicial halls. He thought it a hideous place; he had seen it all before, and he asked himself what he was doing *dans cette galère*. In the lower House there were certain bedaubed walls, in the basest style of imitation, which made him feel faintly sick; there was a lobby adorned with artless prints and photographs of eminent congressmen, which was too serious for a joke and too comical for anything else.

But Pandora was greatly interested; she thought the Capitol very fine; it was easy to criticise the details, but as a whole it was the most impressive building she had ever seen. She was very good company; she had constantly something to say, but she never insisted too much; it was impossible

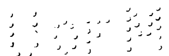
to be less heavy, to drag less, in the business of walking behind a cicerone. Vogelstein could see, too, that she wished to improve her mind; she looked at the historical pictures, at the uncanny statues of local worthies, presented by the different States—they were of different sizes, as if they had been "numbered," in a shop—she asked questions of the conductor, and in the chamber of the Senate requested him to show her the chairs of the gentlemen from New York. She sat down in one of them, though Mrs. Steuben told her *that* senator (she mistook the chair, dropping into another State) was a horrid old thing. Throughout the hour that he spent with her Vogelstein seemed to see how it was that she had made herself. They walked about afterwards on the magnificent terrace that surrounds the Capitol, the great marble table on which it stands, and made vague remarks (Pandora's were the most definite) about the yellow sheen of the Potomac, the hazy hills of Virginia, the far-gleaming pediment of Arlington, the raw, confused-looking country. Washington was beneath them, bristling and geometrical; the long lines of its avenues seemed to stretch into national futures. Pandora asked Vogelstein if he had ever been to Athens, and, on his replying in the affirmative, inquired whether the eminence on which they stood did not give him an idea of the Acropolis in its prime. Vogelstein deferred the answer to this question to their next meeting; he was glad (in spite of the question) to make pretexts for seeing her again.

He did so on the morrow; Mrs. Steuben's

picnic was still three days distant. He called on Pandora a second time, and he met her every evening in the Washington world. It took very little of this to remind him that he was forgetting both Mrs. Dangerfield's warnings and the admonitions—long familiar to him—of his own conscience. Was he in peril of love? Was he to be sacrificed on the altar of the American girl—an altar at which those other poor fellows had poured out some of the bluest blood in Germany, and at which he had declared himself that he would never seriously worship? He decided that he was not in real danger; that he had taken his precautions too well. It was true that a young person who had succeeded so well for herself might be a great help to her husband; but Vogelstein, on the whole, preferred that his success should be his own; it would not be agreeable to him to have the air of being pushed by his wife. Such a wife as that would wish to push him; and he could hardly admit to himself that this was what fate had in reserve for him—to be propelled in his career by a young lady who would perhaps attempt to talk to the Kaiser as he had heard her the other night talk to the President. Would she consent to relinquish relations with her family, or would she wish still to borrow plastic relief from that domestic background? That her family was so impossible was to a certain extent an advantage; for if they had been a little better the question of a rupture would have been less easy. Vogelstein turned over these ideas in spite of his security, or perhaps, indeed, because of it. The

security made them speculative and disinterested. They haunted him during the excursion to Mount Vernon, which took place according to traditions long established.

Mrs. Steuben's picnickers assembled on the steamer, and were set afloat on the big brown stream which had already seemed to Vogelstein to have too much bosom and too little bank. Here and there, however, he became aware of a shore where there was something to look at, even though he was conscious at the same time that he had of old lost great opportunities of idyllic talk in not sitting beside Pandora Day on the deck of the North German Lloyd. The two turned round together to contemplate Alexandria, which for Pandora, as she declared, was a revelation of old Virginia. She told Vogelstein that she was always hearing about it during the civil war, years before. Little girl as she had been at the time, she remembered all the names that were on people's lips during those years of reiteration. This historic spot had a certain picturesqueness of decay, a reference to older things, to a dramatic past. The past of Alexandria appeared in the vista of three or four short streets, sloping up a hill and bordered with old brick warehouses, erected for merchandise that had ceased to come or go. It looked hot and blank and sleepy, down to the shabby waterside where tattered darkies dangled their bare feet from the edge of the rotting wharves. Pandora was even more interested in Mount Vernon (when at last its wooded bluff began to command the river) than she had been in the Capitol; and after they



had disembarked and ascended to the celebrated mansion she insisted on going into every room it contained. She declared that it had the finest situation in the world, and that it was a shame they didn't give it to the President for his villeggiatura. Most of her companions had seen the house often, and were now coupling themselves, in the grounds, according to their sympathies, so that it was easy for Vogelstein to offer the benefit of his own experience to the most inquisitive member of the party. They were not to lunch for another hour, and in the interval Vogelstein wandered about with Pandora. The breath of the Potomac, on the boat, had been a little harsh, but on the softly-curving lawn, beneath the clustered trees, with the river relegated to a mere shining presence far below and in the distance, the day gave out nothing but its mildness, and the whole scene became noble and genial.

Vogelstein could joke a little on great occasions, and the present one was worthy of his humour. He maintained to his companion that the shallow, painted mansion looked like a false house, a "fly," a structure of daubed canvas, on the stage; but she answered him so well with certain economical palaces she had seen in Germany, where, as she said, there was nothing but china stoves and stuffed birds, that he was obliged to admit the home of Washington was after all really *gemüthlich.* What he found so, in fact, was the soft texture of the day, his personal situation, the sweetness of his suspense. For suspense had decidedly become his portion; he was under a charm which made

him feel that he was watching his own life and that his susceptibilities were beyond his control. It hung over him that things might take a turn, from one hour to the other, which would make them very different from what they had been yet; and his heart certainly beat a little faster as he wondered what that turn might be. Why did he come to picnics on fragrant April days with American girls who might lead him too far? Would not such girls be glad to marry a Pomeranian count? And would they, after all, talk that way to the Kaiser? If he were to marry one of them he should have to give her some lessons. In their little tour of the house Vogelstein and his companion had had a great many fellow-visitors, who had also arrived by the steamer and who had hitherto not left them an ideal privacy. But the others gradually dispersed; they circled about a kind of showman, who was the authorised guide, a big, slow, genial, familiar man, with a large beard, and a humorous, edifying, patronising tone, which had immense success when he stopped here and there to make his points, to pass his eyes over his listening flock, then fix them quite above it with a meditative look, and bring out some ancient pleasantry as if it were a sudden inspiration. He made a cheerful thing even of a visit to the tomb of the *pater patriæ*. It is enshrined in a kind of grotto in the grounds, and Vogelstein remarked to Pandora that he was a good man for the place, but that he was too familiar.

"Oh, he would have been familiar with Wash-

ington," said the girl, with the bright dryness with which she often uttered amusing things.

Vogelstein looked at her a moment, and it came over him, as he smiled, that she herself probably would not have been abashed even by the hero with whom history has taken fewest liberties. "You look as if you could hardly believe that," Pandora went on. "You Germans are always in such awe of great people." And it occurred to Vogelstein that perhaps, after all, Washington would have liked her manner, which was wonderfully fresh and natural. The man with the beard was an ideal cicerone for American shrines; he played upon the curiosity of his little band with the touch of a master, and drew them away to see the classic ice-house where the old lady had been found weeping in the belief that it was Washington's grave. While this monument was under inspection Vogelstein and Pandora had the house to themselves, and they spent some time on a pretty terrace, upon which certain windows of the second floor opened—a little roofless verandah, which overhung in a manner, obliquely, all the magnificence of the view—the immense sweep of the river, the artistic plantations, the last-century garden, with its big box-hedges and remains of old espaliers. They lingered here for nearly half an hour, and it was in this spot that Vogelstein enjoyed the only approach to intimate conversation that fate had in store for him with a young woman in whom he had been unable to persuade himself that he was not interested. It is not necessary, and it is not possible, that I should

reproduce this colloquy; but I may mention that it began—as they leaned against the parapet of the terrace and heard the fraternising voice of the showman wafted up to them from a distance—with his saying to her, rather abruptly, that he couldn't make out why they hadn't had more talk together when they crossed the ocean.

"Well, I can, if you can't," said Pandora. "I would have talked if you had spoken to me. I spoke to you first."

"Yes, I remember that," Vogelstein replied, rather awkwardly.

"You listened too much to Mrs. Dangerfield."

"To Mrs. Dangerfield?"

"That woman you were always sitting with; she told you not to speak to me. I have seen her in New York; she speaks to me now herself. She recommended you to have nothing to do with me."

"Oh, how can you say such dreadful things?" the young man murmured, blushing very red.

"You know you can't deny it. You were not attracted by my family. They are charming people when you know them. I don't have a better time anywhere than I have at home," the girl went on, loyally. "But what does it matter? My family are very happy. They are getting quite used to New York. Mrs. Dangerfield is a vulgar wretch; next winter she will call on me."

"You are unlike any girl I have ever seen; I don't understand you," said poor Vogelstein, with the colour still in his face.

"Well, you never will understand me, probably; but what difference does it make?"

Vogelstein attempted to tell her what difference it made, but I have nòt space to follow him here. It is known that when the German mind attempts to explain things it does not always reduce them to simplicity, and Pandora was first mystified, then amused, by some of her companion's revelations. At last I think she was a little frightened, for she remarked irrelevantly, with some decision, that lunch would be ready and they ought to join Mrs. Steuben. He walked slowly, on purpose, as they left the house together, for he had a vague feeling that he was losing her.

"And shall you be in Washington many days yet?" he asked her as they went.

"It will all depend. I am expecting some news. What I shall do will be influenced by that."

The way she talked about expecting news made him feel, somehow, that she had a career, that she was active and independent, so that he could scarcely hope to stop her as she passed. It was certainly true that he had never seen any girl like her. It would have occurred to him that the news she was expecting might have reference to the favour she had asked of the President, if he had not already made up his mind, in the calm of meditation, after that talk with the Bonnycastles, that this favour must be a pleasantry. What she had said to him had a discouraging, a somewhat chilling, effect; nevertheless it was not without a certain ardour that he asked of her whether, so long as she stayed in Washington, he might not ome and see her.

"You may come as often as you like," she answered, "but you won't care for it long."

"You try to torment me," said Vogelstein.

She hesitated a moment. "I mean that I may have some of my family."

"I shall be delighted to see them once more."

She hesitated again. "There are some you have never seen."

In the afternoon, returning to Washington on the steamer, Count Vogelstein received a warning. It came from Mrs. Bonnycastle, and constituted, oddly enough, the second occasion on which an officious female friend had, on the deck of a vessel, advised him on the subject of Pandora Day.

"There is one thing we forgot to tell you, the other night, about the self-made girl," Mrs. Bonnycastle said. "It is never safe to fix your affections upon her, because she has almost always got an impediment somewhere in the background."

Vogelstein looked at her askance, but he smiled and said, "I should understand your information—for which I am so much obliged—a little better if I knew what you mean by an impediment."

"Oh, I mean she is always engaged to some young man who belongs to her earlier phase."

"Her earlier phase?"

"The time before she had made herself—when she lived at home. A young man from Utica, say. They usually have to wait; he is probably in a store. It's a long engagement."

"Do you mean a betrothal—to be married?"

"I don't mean anything German and transcendental. I mean that peculiarly American

institution, a precocious engagement; to be married, of course."

Vogelstein very properly reflected that it was no use his having entered the diplomatic career if he were not able to bear himself as if this interesting generalisation had no particular message for him. He did Mrs. Bonnycastle, moreover, the justice to believe that she would not have taken up the subject so casually if she had suspected that she should make him wince. The whole thing was one of her jokes, and the notification, moreover, was really friendly. "I see, I see," he said in a moment. "The self-made girl has, of course, always had a past. Yes, and the young man in the store—from Utica—is part of her past."

"You express it perfectly," said Mrs. Bonnycastle. "I couldn't say it better myself."

"But, with her present, with her future, I suppose it's all over. How do you say it in America? She lets him slide."

"We don't say it at all!" Mrs. Bonnycastle cried. "She does nothing of the sort; for what do you take her? She sticks to him; that, at least, is what we expect her to do," Mrs. Bonnycastle added, more thoughtfully. "As I tell you, the type is new. We haven't yet had time for complete observations."

"Oh, of course, I hope she sticks to him," Vogelstein declared simply, and with his German accent more apparent, as it always was when he was slightly agitated.

For the rest of the trip he was rather restless. He wandered about the boat, talking little with

the returning revellers. Towards the last, as they drew near Washington, and the white dome of the Capitol hung aloft before them, looking as simple as a suspended snowball, he found himself, on the deck, in proximity to Mrs. Steuben. He reproached himself with having rather neglected her during an entertainment for which he was indebted to her bounty, and he sought to repair his omission by a little friendly talk. But the only thing he could think of to say to her was to ask her by chance whether Miss Day were, to her knowledge, engaged.

Mrs. Steuben turned her Southern eyes upon him with a look of almost romantic compassion. "To my knowledge? Why, of course I would know! I should think you would know too. Didn't you know she was engaged? Why, she has been engaged since she was sixteen."

Vogelstein stared at the dome of the Capitol. "To a gentleman from Utica?"

"Yes, a native of her place. She is expecting him soon."

"Oh, I am so glad to hear it," said Vogelstein, who decidedly, for his career, had promise. "And is she going to marry him?"

"Why, what do people get engaged for? I presume they will marry before long."

"But why have they never done so, in so many years?"

"Well, at first she was too young, and then she thought her family ought to see Europe—of course they could see it better with her—and they spent some time there. And then Mr. Bellamy had

some business difficulties which made him feel as if he didn't want to marry just then. But he has given up business, and I presume he feels more free. Of course it's rather long, but all the while they have been engaged. It's a true, true love," said Mrs. Steuben, who had a little flute-like way of sounding the adjective.

"Is his name Mr. Bellamy?" Vogelstein asked, with his haunting reminiscence. "D. F. Bellamy, eh? And has he been in a store?"

"I don't know what kind of business it was; it was some kind of business in Utica. I think he had a branch in New York. He is one of the leading gentlemen of Utica, and very highly educated. He is a good deal older than Miss Day. He is a very fine man. He stands very high in Utica. I don't know why you look as if you doubted it."

Vogelstein assured Mrs. Steuben that he doubted nothing, and indeed what she told him struck him as all the more credible, as it seemed to him eminently strange. Bellamy had been the name of the gentleman who, a year and a half before, was to have met Pandora on the arrival of the German steamer; it was in Bellamy's name that she had addressed herself with such effusion to Bellamy's friend, the man in the straw hat, who was to fumble in her mother's old clothes. This was a fact which seemed to Vogelstein to finish the picture of her contradictions; it wanted at present no touch to be complete. Yet even as it hung there before him it continued to fascinate him, and he stared at it, detached from surrounding things and feeling

a little as if he had been pitched out of an overturned vehicle, till the boat bumped against one of the outstanding piles of the wharf at which Mrs. Steuben's party was to disembark. There was some delay in getting the steamer adjusted to the dock, during which the passengers stood watching the process, over the side and extracting what entertainment they might from the appearance of the various persons collected to receive it. There were darkies and loafers and hackmen, and also individuals with tufts on their chins, toothpicks in their mouths, their hands in their pockets, rumination in their jaws, and diamond-pins in their shirt-fronts, who looked as if they had sauntered over from Pennsylvania Avenue to while away half an hour, forsaking for that interval their various postures of inclination in the porticos of the hotels and the doorways of the saloons.

"Oh, I am so glad! How sweet of you to come down!" It was a voice close to Vogelstein's shoulder that spoke these words, and the young secretary of legation had no need to turn to see from whom it proceeded. It had been in his ears the greater part of the day, though, as he now perceived, without the fullest richness of expression of which it was capable. Still less was he obliged to turn to discover to whom it was addressed, for the few simple words I have quoted had been flung across the narrowing interval of water, and a gentleman who had stepped to the edge of the dock without Vogelstein's observing him tossed back an immediate reply.

"I got here by the three o'clock train. They

told me in K Street where you were, and I thought I would come down and meet you."

"Charming attention!" said Pandora Day, with her friendly laugh; and for some moments she and her interlocutor appeared to continue the conversation only with their eyes. Meanwhile Vogelstein's, also, were not idle. He looked at Pandora's visitor from head to foot, and he was aware that she was quite unconscious of his own nearness. The gentleman before him was tall, good-looking, well-dressed; evidently he would stand well not only at Utica, but, judging from the way he had planted himself on the dock, in any position which circumstances might compel him to take up. He was about forty years old; he had a black moustache and a business-like eye. He waved a gloved hand at Pandora, as if, when she exclaimed, "Gracious, ain't they long!" to urge her to be patient. She was patient for a minute, and then she asked him if he had any news. He looked at her an instant in silence, smiling, after which he drew from his pocket a large letter with an official seal, and shook it jocosely above his head. This was discreetly, covertly done. No one appeared to observe the little interview but Vogelstein. The boat was now touching the wharf, and the space between the pair was inconsiderable.

"Department of State?" Pandora asked, dropping her voice.

"That's what they call it."

"Well, what country?"

"What's your opinion of the Dutch?" the gentleman asked, for an answer.

"Oh, gracious!" cried Pandora.

"Well, are you going to wait for the return trip?" said the gentleman.

Vogelstein turned away, and presently Mrs. Steuben and her companions disembarked together. When this lady entered a carriage with Pandora, the gentleman who had spoken to the girl followed them; the others scattered, and Vogelstein, declining with thanks a "lift" from Mrs. Bonnycastle, walked home alone, in some intensity of meditation. Two days later he saw in a newspaper an announcement that the President had offered the post of Minister to Holland to D. F. Bellamy, of Utica; and in the course of a month he heard from Mrs. Steuben that Pandora's long engagement had terminated at the nuptial altar. He communicated this news to Mrs. Bonnycastle, who had not heard it, with the remark that there was now ground for a new induction as to the self-made girl.

1884.

THE PATH OF DUTY.

I AM glad I said to you the other night at Doubleton, inquiring—too inquiring—compatriot, that I wouldn't undertake to tell you the story (about Ambrose Tester), but would write it out for you; inasmuch as, thinking it over since I came back to town, I see that it may really be made interesting. It *is* a story, with a regular development, and for telling it I have the advantage that I happened to know about it from the first, and was more or less in the confidence of every one concerned. Then it will amuse me to write it, and I shall do so as carefully and as cleverly as possible. The first winter days in London are not madly gay, so that I have plenty of time, and if the fog is brown outside, the fire is red within. I like the quiet of this season; the glowing chimney-corner, in the midst of the December mirk, makes me think, as I sit by it, of all sorts of things. The idea that is almost always uppermost is the bigness and strangeness of this London world. Long as I have lived here—the sixteenth anniversary of my marriage is only ten days off—there is still a kind of novelty and excitement in it. It is a great pull, as they say here, to have remained

sensitive—to have kept one's own point of view. I mean it's more entertaining—it makes you see a thousand things (not that they are all very charming). But the pleasure of observation does not in the least depend on the beauty of what one observes. You see innumerable little dramas; in fact almost everything has acts and scenes, like a comedy. Very often it is a comedy with tears. There have been a good many of them, I am afraid, in the case I am speaking of. It is because this history of Sir Ambrose Tester and Lady Vandeleur struck me, when you asked me about the relations of the parties, as having that kind of progression, that when I was on the point of responding I checked myself, thinking it a pity to tell you a little when I might tell you all. I scarcely know what made you ask, inasmuch as I had said nothing to excite your curiosity. Whatever you suspected you suspected on your own hook, as they say. You had simply noticed the pair together that evening at Doubleton. If you suspected anything in particular, it is a proof that you are rather sharp, because they are very careful about the way they behave in public. At least they think they are; the result, perhaps, doesn't necessarily follow. If I have been in their confidence you may say that I make a strange use of my privilege in serving them up to feed the prejudices of an opinionated American. You think English society very wicked, and my little story will probably not correct the impression. Though, after all, I don't see why it should minister to it; for what

I said to you (it was all I did say) remains the truth. They are treading together the path of duty. You would be quite right about its being base in me to betray them. It is very true that they have ceased to confide in me; even Joscelind has said nothing to me for more than a year. That is doubtless a sign that the situation is more serious than before, all round—too serious to be talked about. It is also true that you are remarkably discreet, and that even if you were not it would not make much difference, inasmuch as if you were to repeat my revelations in America no one would know whom you were talking about. But, all the same, I should be base; and, therefore, after I have written out my reminiscences for your delectation, I shall simply keep them for my own. You must content yourself with the explanation I have already given you of Sir Ambrose Tester and Lady Vandeleur: they are following—hand in hand, as it were—the path of duty. This will not prevent me from telling everything; on the contrary, don't you see?

I.

HIS brilliant prospects dated from the death of his brother, who had no children, had indeed steadily refused to marry. When I say brilliant prospects, I mean the vision of the baronetcy, one of the oldest in England, of a charming seventeenth-century house, with its park, in Dorsetshire, and a property worth some twenty thousand a year. Such a collection of items is

still dazzling to me, even after what you would call, I suppose, a familiarity with British grandeur. My husband isn't a baronet (or we probably shouldn't be in London in December), and he is far, alas, from having twenty thousand a year. The full enjoyment of these luxuries, on Ambrose Tester's part, was dependent naturally on the death of his father, who was still very much to the fore at the time I first knew the young man. The proof of it is the way he kept nagging at his sons, as the younger used to say, on the question of taking a wife. The nagging had been of no avail, as I have mentioned, with regard to Francis, the elder, whose affections were centred (his brother himself told me) on the wine-cup and the faro-table. He was not a person to admire or imitate, and as the heir to an honourable name and a fine estate was very unsatisfactory indeed. It had been possible in those days to put him into the army, but it was not possible to keep him there, and he was still a very young man when it became plain that any parental dream of a "career" for Frank Tester was exceedingly vain. Old Sir Edmund had thought matrimony would perhaps correct him, but a sterner process than this was needed, and it came to him one day at Monaco—he was most of the time abroad—after an illness so short that none of the family arrived in time. He was reformed altogether, he was utterly abolished. The second son, stepping into his shoes, was such an improvement that it was impossible there should be much simulation of mourning. You have seen him, you know

what he is, there is very little mystery about him. As I am not going to show this composition to you, there is no harm in my writing here that he is—or, at any rate, he was—a remarkably attractive man. I don't say this because he made love to me, but precisely because he didn't. He was always in love with some one else—generally with Lady Vandeleur. You may say that in England that usually doesn't prevent; but Mr. Tester, though he had almost no intermissions, didn't, as a general thing, have duplicates. He was not provided with a second loved object, "under-studying," as they say, the part. It was his practice to keep me accurately informed of the state of his affections—a matter about which he was never in the least vague. When he was in love he knew it and rejoiced in it, and when by a miracle he was not he greatly regretted it. He expatiated to me on the charms of other persons, and this interested me much more than if he had attempted to direct the conversation to my own, as regards which I had no illusions. He has told me some singular things, and I think I may say that for a considerable period my most valued knowledge of English society was extracted from this genial youth. I suppose he usually found me a woman of good counsel, for certain it is that he has appealed to me for the light of wisdom in very extraordinary predicaments. In his earlier years he was perpetually in hot water; he tumbled into scrapes as children tumble into puddles. He invited them, he invented them; and when he came to tell you how his trouble

had come about (and he always told the whole truth) it was difficult to believe that a man should have been so idiotic.

And yet he was not an idiot; he was supposed to be very clever, and certainly is very quick and amusing. He was only reckless, and extraordinarily natural, as natural as if he had been an Irishman. In fact, of all the Englishmen that I have known he is the most Irish in temperament (though he has got over it comparatively of late). I used to tell him that it was a great inconvenience that he didn't speak with a brogue, because then we should be forewarned and know with whom we were dealing. He replied that, by analogy, if he were Irish enough to have a brogue he would probably be English; which seemed to me an answer wonderfully in character. Like most young Britons of his class he went to America, to see the great country, before he was twenty, and he took a letter to my father, who had occasion, *à propos* of some pickle, of course, to render him a considerable service. This led to his coming to see me—I had already been living here three or four years—on his return; and that, in the course of time, led to our becoming fast friends, without, as I tell you, the smallest philandering on either side. But I mustn't protest too much; I shall excite your suspicion. "If he has made love to so many women, why shouldn't he have made love to you?"—some inquiry of that sort you will be likely to make. I have answered it already, "Simply on account of those very engagements." He couldn't make love to every one, and with me

it wouldn't have done him the least good. It was a more amiable weakness than his brother's, and he has always behaved very well. How well he behaved on a very important occasion is precisely the subject of my story.

He was supposed to have embraced the diplomatic career, had been secretary of legation at some German capital; but after his brother's death he came home and looked out for a seat in Parliament. He found it with no great trouble, and has kept it ever since. No one would have the heart to turn him out, he is so good-looking. It's a great thing to be represented by one of the handsomest men in England, it creates such a favourable association of ideas. Any one would be amazed to discover that the borough he sits for, and the name of which I am always forgetting, is not a very pretty place. I have never seen it, and have no idea that it isn't, and I am sure he will survive every revolution. The people must feel that if they shouldn't keep him some monster would be returned. You remember his appearance, how tall, and fair, and strong he is, and always laughing, yet without looking silly. He is exactly the young man girls in America figure to themselves—in the place of the hero—when they read English novels and wish to imagine something very aristocratic and Saxon. A "bright Bostonian" who met him once at my house, exclaimed as soon as he had gone out of the room, "At last, at last, I behold it, the moustache of Roland Tremayne!"

"Of Roland Tremayne?"

"Don't you remember in *A Lawless Love*, how often it's mentioned, and how glorious and golden it was? Well, I have never seen it till now, but now I *have* seen it!"

If you hadn't seen Ambrose Tester, the best description I could give of him would be to say that he looked like Roland Tremayne. I don't know whether that hero was a "strong Liberal," but this is what Sir Ambrose is supposed to be. (He succeeded his father two years ago, but I shall come to that.) He is not exactly what I should call thoughtful, but he is interested, or thinks he is, in a lot of things that I don't understand, and that one sees and skips in the newspapers — volunteering, and redistribution, and sanitation, and the representation of minors—minorities—what is it? When I said just now that he is always laughing, I ought to have explained that I didn't mean when he is talking to Lady Vandeleur. She makes him serious, makes him almost solemn; by which I don't mean that she bores him. Far from it; but when he is in her company he is thoughtful; he pulls his golden moustache, and Roland Tremayne looks as if his vision were turned in, and he were meditating on her words. He doesn't say much himself; it is she—she used to be so silent—who does the talking. She has plenty to say to him; she describes to him the charms that she discovers in the path of duty. He seldom speaks in the House, I believe, but when he does it's off-hand, and amusing, and sensible, and every one likes it. He will never be a great statesman, but he will add to the softness

of Dorsetshire, and remain, in short, a very gallant, pleasant, prosperous, typical English gentleman, with a name, a fortune, a perfect appearance, a devoted, bewildered little wife, a great many reminiscences, a great many friends (including Lady Vandeleur and myself), and, strange to say, with all these advantages, something that faintly resembles a conscience.

II.

FIVE years ago he told me his father insisted on his marrying—would not hear of his putting it off any longer. Sir Edmund had been harping on this string ever since he came back from Germany, had made it both a general and a particular request, not only urging him to matrimony in the abstract, but pushing him into the arms of every young woman in the country. Ambrose had promised, procrastinated, temporised; but at last he was at the end of his evasions, and his poor father had taken the tone of supplication. "He thinks immensely of the name, of the place, and all that, and he has got it into his head that if I don't marry before he dies I won't marry after." So much I remember Ambrose Tester said to me. "It's a fixed idea; he has got it on the brain. He wants to see me married with his eyes, and he wants to take his grandson in his arms. Not without that will he be satisfied that the whole thing will go straight. He thinks he is nearing his end, but he isn't—he will live to see a hundred, don't you think so?—and he has made

me a solemn appeal to put an end to what he calls his suspense. He has an idea some one will get hold of me—some woman I can't marry. As if I were not old enough to take care of myself!"

"Perhaps he is afraid of me," I suggested, facetiously.

"No, it isn't you," said my visitor, betraying by his tone that it was some one, though he didn't say whom. "That's all rot, of course; one marries sooner or later, and I shall do like every one else. If I marry before I die it's as good as if I marry before he dies, isn't it? I should be delighted to have the governor at my wedding, but it isn't necessary for the legality, is it?"

I asked him what he wished me to do, and how I could help him. He knew already my peculiar views, that I was trying to get husbands for all the girls of my acquaintance and to prevent the men from taking wives. The sight of an unmarried woman afflicted me, and yet when my male friends changed their state I took it as a personal offence. He let me know that, so far as he was concerned, I must prepare myself for this injury, for he had given his father his word that another twelvemonth should not see him a bachelor. The old man had given him *carte blanche*, he made no condition beyond exacting that the lady should have youth and health. Ambrose Tester, at any rate, had taken a vow, and now he was going seriously to look about him. I said to him that what must be must be, and that there were plenty of charming girls about the land, among whom he could suit himself easily

enough. There was no better match in England, I said, and he would only have to make his choice. That, however, is not what I thought, for my real reflections were summed up in the silent exclamation, "What a pity Lady Vandeleur isn't a widow!" I hadn't the smallest doubt that if she were he would marry her on the spot; and after he had gone I wondered considerably what *she* thought of this turn in his affairs. If it was disappointing to me, how little it must be to *her* taste! Sir Edmund had not been so much out of the way in fearing there might be obstacles to his son's taking the step he desired. Margaret Vandeleur was an obstacle—I knew it as well as if Mr. Tester had told me.

I don't mean there was anything in their relation he might not freely have alluded to, for Lady Vandeleur, in spite of her beauty and her tiresome husband, was not a woman who could be accused of an indiscretion. Her husband was a pedant about trifles—the shape of his hat-brim, the *pose* of his coachman, and cared for nothing else; but she was as nearly a saint as one may be when one has rubbed shoulders for ten years with the best society in Europe. It is a characteristic of that society that even its saints are suspected, and I go too far in saying that little pin-pricks were not administered, in considerable numbers, to her reputation. But she didn't feel them, for, still more than Ambrose Tester, she was a person to whose happiness a good conscience was necessary. I should almost say that for her happiness it was sufficient, and, at any rate, it was

only those who didn't know her that pretended to speak of her lightly. If one had the honour of her acquaintance one might have thought her rather shut up to her beauty and her grandeur, but one couldn't but feel there was something in her composition that would keep her from vulgar aberrations. Her husband was such a feeble type that she must have felt doubly she had been put upon her honour. To deceive such a man as that was to make him more ridiculous than he was already, and from such a result a woman bearing his name may very well have shrunk. Perhaps it would have been worse for Lord Vandeleur, who had every pretension of his order and none of its amiability, if he had been a better or, at least, a cleverer man. When a woman behaves so well she is not obliged to be careful, and there is no need of consulting appearances when one is one's self an appearance. Lady Vandeleur accepted Ambrose Tester's attentions, and heaven knows they were frequent; but she had such an air of perfect equilibrium that one couldn't see her, in imagination, bend responsive. Incense was incense, but one saw her sitting quite serene among the fumes. That honour of her acquaintance of which I just now spoke it had been given me to enjoy; that is to say, I met her a dozen times in the season in a hot crowd, and we smiled sweetly and murmured a vague question or two, without hearing, or even trying to hear, each other's answer. If I knew that Ambrose Tester was perpetually in and out of her house and always arranging with her that they should go to the

same places, I doubt whether she, on her side, knew how often he came to see me. I don't think he would have let her know, and am conscious, in saying this, that it indicated an advanced state of intimacy (with her, I mean).

I also doubt very much whether he asked her to look about, on his behalf, for a future Lady Tester. This request he was so good as to make of me; but I told him I would have nothing to do with the matter. If Joscelind is unhappy, I am thankful to say the responsibility is not mine. I have found English husbands for two or three American girls, but providing English wives is a different affair. I know the sort of men that will suit women, but one would have to be very clever to know the sort of women that will suit men. I told Ambrose Tester that he must look out for himself, but, in spite of his promise, I had very little belief that he would do anything of the sort. I thought it probable that the old baronet would pass away without seeing a new generation come in; though when I intimated as much to Mr. Tester, he made answer in substance (it was not quite so crudely said) that his father, old as he was, would hold on till his bidding was done, and if it should not be done he would hold on out of spite. "Oh, he will tire me out": that I remember Ambrose Tester did say. I had done him injustice, for six months later he told me he was engaged. It had all come about very suddenly. From one day to the other the right young woman had been found. I forget who had found her; some aunt or cousin, I think; it had not been the

young man himself. But when she was found, he rose to the occasion; he took her up seriously, he approved of her thoroughly, and I am not sure that he didn't fall a little in love with her, ridiculous (excuse my London tone) as this accident may appear. He told me that his father was delighted, and I knew afterwards that he had good reason to be. It was not till some weeks later that I saw the girl; but meanwhile I had received the pleasantest impression of her, and this impression came—must have come—mainly from what her intended told me. That proves that he spoke with some positiveness, spoke as if he really believed he was doing a good thing. I had it on my tongue's end to ask him how Lady Vandeleur liked her, but I fortunately checked this vulgar inquiry. He liked her, evidently, as I say; every one liked her, and when I knew her I liked her better even than the others. I like her to-day more than ever; it is fair you should know that, in reading this account of her situation. It doubtless colours my picture, gives a point to my sense of the strangeness of my little story.

Joscelind Bernardstone came of a military race, and had been brought up in camps—by which I don't mean she was one of those objectionable young women who are known as garrison-hacks. She was in the flower of her freshness, and had been kept in the tent, receiving, as an only daughter, the most "particular" education from the excellent Lady Emily (General Bernardstone married a daughter of Lord Clanduffy), who looks like a pink-faced rabbit, and is (after Joscelind)

one of the nicest women I know. When I met them in a country-house, a few weeks after the marriage was "arranged," as they say here, Joscelind won my affections by saying to me, with her timid directness (the speech made me feel sixty years old), that she must thank me for having been so kind to Mr. Tester. You saw her at Doubleton, and you will remember that, though she has no regular beauty, many a prettier woman would be very glad to look like her. She is as fresh as a new-laid egg, as light as a feather, as strong as a mail-phaeton. She is perfectly mild, yet she is clever enough to be sharp if she would. I don't know that clever women are necessarily thought ill-natured, but it is usually taken for granted that amiable women are very limited. Lady Tester is a refutation of the theory, which must have been invented by a vixenish woman who was *not* clever. She has an adoration for her husband, which absorbs her without in the least making her silly, unless indeed it is silly to be modest, as in this brutal world I sometimes believe. Her modesty is so great that being unhappy has hitherto presented itself to her as a form of egotism—that egotism which she has too much delicacy to cultivate. She is by no means sure that, if being married to her beautiful baronet is not the ideal state she dreamed it, the weak point of the affair is not simply in her own presumption. It doesn't express her condition, at present, to say that she is unhappy or disappointed, or that she has a sense of injury. All this is latent; meanwhile, what is obvious is that she is bewildered—she simply

doesn't understand, and her perplexity, to me, is unspeakably touching. She looks about her for some explanation, some light. She fixes her eyes on mine sometimes, and on those of other people, with a kind of searching dumbness, as if there were some chance that I—that they—may explain, may tell her what it is that has happened to her. I can explain very well—but not to her—only to you!

III.

IT was a brilliant match for Miss Bernardstone, who had no fortune at all, and all her friends were of the opinion that she had done very well. After Easter she was in London with her people, and I saw a good deal of them—in fact, I rather cultivated them. They might perhaps even have thought me a little patronising, if they had been given to thinking that sort of thing. But they were not; that is not in their line. English people are very apt to attribute motives—some of them attribute much worse ones than we poor simpletons in America recognise, than we have even heard of. But that is only some of them; others don't, but take everything literally and genially. That was the case with the Bernardstones; you could be sure that on their way home, after dining with you, they wouldn't ask each other how in the world any one could call you pretty, or say that many people *did* believe, all the same, that you had poisoned your grandfather.

Lady Emily was exceedingly gratified at her daughter's engagement; of course she was very

quiet about it, she didn't clap her hands or drag in Mr. Tester's name; but it was easy to see that she felt a kind of maternal peace, an abiding satisfaction. The young man behaved as well as possible, was constantly seen with Joscelind, and smiled down at her in the kindest, most protecting way. They looked beautiful together—you would have said it was a duty for people whose colour matched so well to marry. Of course he was immensely taken up, and didn't come very often to see me; but he came sometimes, and when he sat there he had a look which I didn't understand at first. Presently I saw what it expressed; in my drawing-room he was off duty, he had no longer to sit up and play a part; he would lean back and rest and draw a long breath, and forget that the day of his execution was fixed. There was to be no indecent haste about the marriage; it was not to take place till after the session, at the end of August. It puzzled me and rather distressed me that his heart shouldn't be a little more in the matter; it seemed strange to be engaged to so charming a girl and yet go through with it as if it were simply a social duty. If one hadn't been in love with her at first, one ought to have been at the end of a week or two. If Ambrose Tester was not (and to me he didn't pretend to be), he carried it off, as I have said, better than I should have expected. He was a gentleman, and he behaved like a gentleman—with the added punctilio, I think, of being sorry for his betrothed. But it was difficult to see what, in the long run, he could expect to make of such a position. If

a man marries an ugly, unattractive woman for reasons of state, the thing is comparatively simple; it is understood between them, and he need have no remorse at not offering her a sentiment of which there has been no question. But when he picks out a charming creature to gratify his father and *les convenances*, it is not so easy to be happy in not being able to care for her. It seemed to me that it would have been much better for Ambrose Tester to bestow himself upon a girl who might have given him an excuse for tepidity. His wife should have been healthy but stupid, prolific but morose. Did he expect to continue not to be in love with Joscelind, or to conceal from her the mechanical nature of his attentions? It was difficult to see how he could wish to do the one or succeed in doing the other. Did he expect such a girl as that would be happy if he didn't love her? and did he think himself capable of being happy if it should turn out that she was miserable? If she shouldn't be miserable—that is, if she should be indifferent, and, as they say, console herself, would he like that any better?

I asked myself all these questions and I should have liked to ask them of Mr. Tester; but I didn't, for after all he couldn't have answered them. Poor young man! he didn't pry into things as I do; he was not analytic, like us Americans, as they say in reviews. He thought he was behaving remarkably well, and so he was—for a man; that was the strange part of it. It had been proper that in spite of his reluctance he should take a wife, and he had dutifully set about

it. As a good thing is better for being well done, he had taken the best one he could possibly find. He was enchanted with—with his young lady, you might ask? Not in the least; with himself; that is the sort of person a man is! Their virtues are more dangerous than their vices, and heaven preserve you when they want to keep a promise! It is never a promise to *you*, you will notice. A man will sacrifice a woman to live as a gentleman should, and then ask for your sympathy—for *him!* And I don't speak of the bad ones, but of the good. They, after all, are the worst. Ambrose Tester, as I say, didn't go into these details, but, synthetic as he might be, was conscious that his position was false. He felt that sooner or later, and rather sooner than later, he would have to make it true—a process that couldn't possibly be agreeable. He would really have to make up his mind to care for his wife or not to care for her. What would Lady Vandeleur say to one alternative, and what would little Joscelind say to the other? That is what it was to have a pertinacious father and to be an accommodating son. With me it was easy for Ambrose Tester to be superficial, for, as I tell you, if I didn't wish to engage him, I didn't wish to disengage him, and I didn't insist. Lady Vandeleur insisted, I was afraid; to be with her was, of course, very complicated; even more than Miss Bernardstone she must have made him feel that his position was false. I must add that he once mentioned to me that she had told him he ought to marry. At any rate it is an immense thing to be a pleasant

fellow. Our young fellow was so universally pleasant that, of course, his *fiancée* came in for her share. So did Lady Emily, suffused with hope, which made her pinker than ever; she told me he sent flowers even to her. One day in the Park, I was riding early; the Row was almost empty. I came up behind a lady and gentleman who were walking their horses, close to each other, side by side. In a moment I recognised her, but not before seeing that nothing could have been more benevolent than the way Ambrose Tester was bending over his future wife. If he struck me as a lover at that moment, of course he struck her so. But that isn't the way they ride to-day.

IV.

ONE day, about the end of June, he came in to see me when I had two or three other visitors; you know that even at that season I am almost always at home from six to seven. He had not been three minutes in the room before I saw that he was different—different from what he had been the last time, and I guessed that something had happened in relation to his marriage. My visitors didn't, unfortunately, and they stayed and stayed until I was afraid he would have to go away without telling me what, I was sure, he had come for. But he sat them out; I think that, by exception, they didn't find him pleasant. After we were alone he abused them a little, and then he said, "Have you heard about Vandeleur? He's very ill. She's awfully anxious." I hadn't heard,

and I told him so, asking a question or two; then my inquiries ceased, my breath almost failed me, for I had become aware of something very strange. The way he looked at me when he told me his news was a full confession—a confession so full that I had needed a moment to take it in. He was not too strong a man to be taken by surprise —not so strong but that in the presence of an unexpected occasion his first movement was to look about for a little help. I venture to call it help, the sort of thing he came to me for on that summer afternoon. It is always help when a woman who is not an idiot lets an embarrassed man take up her time. If he too is not an idiot, that doesn't diminish the service; on the contrary his superiority to the average helps him to profit. Ambrose Tester had said to me more than once, in the past, that he was capable of telling me things, because I was an American, that he wouldn't confide to his own people. He had proved it before this, as I have hinted, and I must say that being an American, with him, was sometimes a questionable honour. I don't know whether he thinks us more discreet and more sympathetic (if he keeps up the system: he has abandoned it with me), or only more insensible, more proof against shocks; but it is certain that, like some other Englishmen I have known, he has appeared, in delicate cases, to think I would take a comprehensive view. When I have inquired into the grounds of this discrimination in our favour, he has contented himself with saying, in the British-cursory manner, "Oh, I don't know; you are dif-

ferent!" I remember he remarked once that our impressions were fresher. And I am sure that now it was because of my nationality, in addition to other merits, that he treated me to the confession I have just alluded to. At least I don't suppose he would have gone about saying to people in general, "Her husband will probably die, you know; then why shouldn't I marry Lady Vandeleur?"

That was the question which his whole expression and manner asked of me, and of which, after a moment, I decided to take no notice. Why shouldn't he? There was an excellent reason why he shouldn't. It would just kill Joscelind Bernardstone; that was why he shouldn't! The idea that he should be ready to do it frightened me, and, independent as he might think my point of view, I had no desire to discuss such abominations. It struck me as an abomination at this very first moment, and I have never wavered in my judgment of it. I am always glad when I can take the measure of a thing as soon as I see it; it's a blessing to *feel* what we think, without balancing and comparing. It's a great rest, too, and a great luxury. That, as I say, was the case with the feeling excited in me by this happy idea of Ambrose Tester's. Cruel and wanton I thought it then, cruel and wanton I thought it later, when it was pressed upon me. I knew there were many other people that didn't agree with me, and I can only hope for them that their conviction was as quick and positive as mine; it all depends upon the way a thing strikes one. But I will add to this another remark. I thought I was right then,

and I still think I was right; but it strikes me as a pity that I should have wished so much to be right. Why couldn't I be content to be wrong? to renounce my influence (since I appeared to possess the mystic article), and let my young friend do as he liked? As you observed the situation at Doubleton, shouldn't you say it was of a nature to make one wonder whether, after all, one did render a service to the younger lady?

At all events, as I say, I gave no sign to Ambrose Tester that I understood him, that I guessed what he wished to come to. He got no satisfaction out of me that day; it is very true that he made up for it later. I expressed regret at Lord Vandeleur's illness, inquired into its nature and origin, hoped it wouldn't prove as grave as might be feared, said I would call at the house and ask about him, commiserated discreetly her ladyship, and, in short, gave my young man no chance whatever. He knew that I had guessed his *arrière-pensée*, but he let me off for the moment, for which I was thankful; either because he was still ashamed of it, or because he supposed I was reserving myself for the catastrophe—should it occur. Well, my dear, it did occur, at the end of ten days. Mr. Tester came to see me twice in that interval, each time to tell me that poor Vandeleur was worse; he had some internal inflammation which, in nine cases out of ten, is fatal. His wife was all devotion; she was with him night and day. I had the news from other sources as well; I leave you to imagine whether in London, at the height of the season, such a situation could fail to

be considerably discussed. To the discussion as yet, however, I contributed little, and with Ambrose Tester nothing at all. I was still on my guard. I never admitted for a moment that it was possible there should be any change in his plans. By this time, I think, he had quite ceased to be ashamed of his idea, he was in a state almost of exultation about it; but he was very angry with me for not giving him an opening.

As I look back upon the matter now, there is something almost amusing in the way we watched each other—he thinking that I evaded his question only to torment him (he believed me, or pretended to believe me, capable of this sort of perversity), and I determined not to lose ground by betraying an insight into his state of mind which he might twist into an expression of sympathy. I wished to leave my sympathy where I had placed it, with Lady Emily and her daughter, of whom I continued, bumping against them at parties, to have some observation. They gave no signal of alarm; of course it would have been premature. The girl, I am sure, had no idea of the existence of a rival. How they had kept her in the dark I don't know; but it was easy to see she was too much in love to suspect or to criticise. With Lady Emily it was different; she was a woman of charity, but she touched the world at too many points not to feel its vibrations. However, the dear little lady planted herself firmly; to the eye she was still enough. It was not from Ambrose Tester that I first heard of Lord Vandeleur's death; it was announced, with a quarter of a

column of "padding," in the *Times*. I have always known the *Times* was a wonderful journal, but this never came home to me so much as when it produced a quarter of a column about Lord Vandeleur. It was a triumph of word-spinning. If he had carried out his vocation, if he had been a tailor or a hatter (that's how I see him), there might have been something to say about him. But he missed his vocation, he missed everything but posthumous honours. I was so sure Ambrose Tester would come in that afternoon, and so sure he knew I should expect him, that I threw over an engagement on purpose. But he didn't come in, nor the next day, nor the next. There were two possible explanations of his absence. One was that he was giving all his time to consoling Lady Vandeleur; the other was that he was giving it all, as a blind, to Joscelind Bernardstone. Both proved incorrect, for when he at last turned up he told me he had been for a week in the country, at his father's. Sir Edmund also had been unwell; but he had pulled through better than poor Lord Vandeleur. I wondered at first whether his son had been talking over with him the question of a change of base; but guessed in a moment that he had not suffered this alarm. I don't think that Ambrose would have spared him if he had thought it necessary to give him warning; but he probably held that his father would have no ground for complaint so long as he should marry some one; would have no right to remonstrate if he simply transferred his contract. Lady Vandeleur had had two children (whom she

had lost), and might, therefore, have others whom she shouldn't lose; that would have been a reply to nice discriminations on Sir Edmund's part.

V.

In reality what the young man had been doing was thinking it over beneath his ancestral oaks and beeches. His countenance showed this—showed it more than Miss Bernardstone could have liked. He looked like a man who was crossed, not like a man who was happy, in love. I was no more disposed than before to help him out with his plot, but at the end of ten minutes we were articulately discussing it. When I say *we* were, I mean he was; for I sat before him quite mute, at first, and amazed at the clearness with which, before his conscience, he had argued his case. He had persuaded himself that it was quite a simple matter to throw over poor Joscelind and keep himself free for the expiration of Lady Vandeleur's term of mourning. The deliberations of an impulsive man sometimes land him in strange countries. Ambrose Tester confided his plan to me as a tremendous secret. He professed to wish immensely to know how it appeared to me, and whether my woman's wit couldn't discover for him some loophole big enough round, some honourable way of not keeping faith. Yet at the same time he seemed not to foresee that I should, of necessity, be simply horrified. Disconcerted and perplexed (a little), that he was prepared to find me; but if I had refused, as yet, to come to

his assistance, he appeared to suppose it was only because of the real difficulty of suggesting to him that perfect pretext of which he was in want. He evidently counted upon me, however, for some illuminating proposal, and I think he would have liked to say to me, "You have always pretended to be a great friend of mine"—I hadn't; the pretension was all on his side—"and now is your chance to show it. Go to Joscelind and make her feel (women have a hundred ways of doing that sort of thing) that through Vandeleur's death the change in my situation is complete. If she is the girl I take her for, she will know what to do in the premises."

I was not prepared to oblige him to this degree, and I lost no time in telling him so, after my first surprise at seeing how definite his purpose had become. His contention, after all, was very simple. He had been in love with Lady Vandeleur for years, and was now more in love with her than ever. There had been no appearance of her being, within a calculable period, liberated by the death of her husband. This nobleman was—he didn't say what just then (it was too soon)—but he was only forty years old, and in such health and preservation as to make such a contingency infinitely remote. Under these circumstances, Ambrose had been driven, for the most worldly reasons—he was ashamed of them, pah!—into an engagement with a girl he didn't love, and didn't pretend to love. Suddenly the unexpected occurred; the woman he did love had become accessible to him, and all the relations

of things were altered. Why shouldn't he alter too?—why shouldn't Miss Bernardstone alter, Lady Emily alter, and every one alter? It would be *wrong* in him to marry Joscelind in so changed a world—a moment's consideration would certainly assure me of that. He could no longer carry out his part of the bargain, and the transaction must stop before it went any further. If Joscelind knew, she would be the first to recognise this, and the thing for her now was to know.

"Go and tell her, then, if you are so sure of it," I said. "I wonder you have put it off so many days."

He looked at me with a melancholy eye. "Of course I know it's beastly awkward."

It was beastly awkward certainly; there I could quite agree with him, and this was the only sympathy he extracted from me. It was impossible to be less helpful, less merciful, to an embarrassed young man than I was on that occasion. But other occasions followed very quickly, on which Mr. Tester renewed his appeal with greater eloquence. He assured me that it was torture to be with his intended, and every hour that he didn't break off committed him more deeply and more fatally. I repeated only once my previous question—asked him only once why then he didn't tell her he had changed his mind. The inquiry was idle, was even unkind, for my young man was in a very tight place. He didn't tell her, simply because he couldn't, in spite of the anguish of feeling that his chance to right himself was rapidly passing away. When I asked him if Joscelind appeared to have guessed nothing

he broke out, "How in the world can she guess when I am so kind to her? I am so sorry for her, poor little wretch, that I can't help being nice to her. And from the moment I am nice to her she thinks it's all right."

I could see perfectly what he meant by that, and I liked him more for this little generosity than I disliked him for his nefarious scheme. In fact, I didn't dislike him at all when I saw what an influence my judgment would have on him. I very soon gave him the full benefit of it. I had thought over his case with all the advantages of his own presentation of it, and it was impossible for me to see how he could decently get rid of the girl. That, as I have said, had been my original opinion, and quickened reflection only confirmed it. As I have also said, I hadn't in the least recommended him to become engaged; but once he had done so I recommended him to abide by it. It was all very well being in love with Lady Vandeleur; he might be in love with her, but he hadn't promised to marry her. It was all very well not being in love with Miss Bernardstone; but, as it happened, he had promised to marry her, and in my country a gentleman was supposed to keep such promises. If it was a question of keeping them only so long as was convenient where would any of us be? I assure you I became very eloquent and moral—yes, moral, I maintain the word, in spite of your perhaps thinking (as you are very capable of doing) that I ought to have advised him in just the opposite sense. It was not a question of love,

but of marriage, for he had never promised to love poor Joscelind. It was useless his saying it was dreadful to marry without love; he knew that he thought it, and the people he lived with thought it, nothing of the kind. Half his friends had married on those terms. "Yes, and a pretty sight their private life presented!" That might be, but it was the first time I had ever heard him say it. A fortnight before he had been quite ready to do like the others. I knew what I thought, and I suppose I expressed it with some clearness, for my arguments made him still more uncomfortable, unable as he was either to accept them or to act in contempt of them. Why he should have cared so much for my opinion is a mystery I can't elucidate; to understand my little story you must simply swallow it. That he did care is proved by the exasperation with which he suddenly broke out, "Well, then, as I understand you, what you recommend me is to marry Miss Bernardstone, and carry on an intrigue with Lady Vandeleur!"

He knew perfectly that I recommended nothing of the sort, and he must have been very angry to indulge in this *boutade*. He told me that other people didn't think as I did—that every one was of the opinion that between a woman he didn't love and a woman he had adored for years it was a plain moral duty not to hesitate. "Don't hesitate then!" I exclaimed; but I didn't get rid of him with this, for he returned to the charge more than once (he came to me so often that I thought he must neglect both his other

alternatives), and let me know again that the voice of society was quite against my view. You will doubtless be surprised at such an intimation that he had taken "society" into his confidence, and wonder whether he went about asking people whether they thought he might back out. I can't tell you exactly, but I know that for some weeks his dilemma was a great deal talked about. His friends perceived he was at the parting of the roads, and many of them had no difficulty in saying which one *they* would take. Some observers thought he ought to do nothing, to leave things as they were. Others took very high ground and discoursed upon the sanctity of love and the wickedness of really deceiving the girl, as that would be what it would amount to (if he should lead her to the altar). Some held that it was too late to escape, others maintained that it is never too late. Some thought Miss Bernardstone very much to be pitied; some reserved their compassion for Ambrose Tester; others, still, lavished it upon Lady Vandeleur. The prevailing opinion, I think, was that he ought to obey the promptings of his heart—London cares so much for the heart! Or is it that London is simply ferocious, and always prefers the spectacle that is more entertaining? As it would prolong the drama for the young man to throw over Miss Bernardstone, there was a considerable readiness to see the poor girl sacrificed. She was like a Christian maiden in the Roman arena. That is what Ambrose Tester meant by telling me that public opinion was on his side. I don't think he

chattered about his quandary, but people, knowing his situation, guessed what was going on in his mind, and he, on his side, guessed what they said. London discussions might as well go on in the whispering-gallery of St. Paul's.

I could, of course, do only one thing—I could but re-affirm my conviction that the Roman attitude, as I may call it, was cruel, was falsely sentimental. This naturally didn't help him as he wished to be helped—didn't remove the obstacle to his marrying in a year or two Lady Vandeleur. Yet he continued to look to me for inspiration—I must say it at the cost of making him appear a very feeble-minded gentleman. There was a moment when I thought him capable of an oblique movement, of temporising with a view to escape. If he succeeded in postponing his marriage long enough, the Bernardstones would throw *him* over, and I suspect that for a day he entertained the idea of fixing this responsibility on them. But he was too honest and too generous to do so for longer, and his destiny was staring him in the face when an accident gave him a momentary relief. General Bernardstone died, after an illness as sudden and short as that which had carried off Lord Vandeleur; his wife and daughter were plunged into mourning and immediately retired into the country. A week later we heard that the girl's marriage would be put off for several months—partly on account of her mourning and partly because her mother, whose only companion she had now become, could not bear to part with her at the

time originally fixed and actually so near. People of course looked at each other—said it was the beginning of the end, a "dodge" of Ambrose Tester's. I wonder they didn't accuse him of poisoning the poor old general. I know to a certainty that he had nothing to do with the delay, that the proposal came from Lady Emily, who, in her bereavement, wished, very naturally, to keep a few months longer the child she was going to lose for ever. It must be said, in justice to her prospective son-in-law, that he was capable either of resigning himself or of frankly (with however many blushes) telling Joscelind he couldn't keep his agreement, but was not capable of trying to wriggle out of his difficulty. The plan of simply telling Joscelind he couldn't—this was the one he had fixed upon as the best, and this was the one of which I remarked to him that it had a defect which should be counted against its advantages. The defect was that it would kill Joscelind on the spot.

I think he believed me, and his believing me made this unexpected respite very welcome to him. There was no knowing what might happen in the interval, and he passed a large part of it in looking for an issue. And yet, at the same time, he kept up the usual forms with the girl whom in his heart he had renounced. I was told more than once (for I had lost sight of the pair during the summer and autumn) that these forms were at times very casual, that he neglected Miss Bernardstone most flagrantly, and had quite resumed his old intimacy with Lady Vandeleur. I

don't exactly know what was meant by this, for she spent the first three months of her widowhood in complete seclusion, in her own old house in Norfolk, where he certainly was not staying with her. I believe he stayed some time, for the partridge-shooting, at a place a few miles off. It came to my ears that if Miss Bernardstone didn't take the hint it was because she was determined to stick to him through thick and thin. She never offered to let him off, and I was sure she never would; but I was equally sure that, strange as it may appear, he had not ceased to be nice to her. I have never exactly understood why he didn't hate her, and I am convinced that he was not a comedian in his conduct to her—he was only a good fellow. I have spoken of the satisfaction that Sir Edmund took in his daughter-in-law that was to be; he delighted in looking at her, longed for her when she was out of his sight, and had her, with her mother, staying with him in the country for weeks together. If Ambrose was not so constantly at her side as he might have been, this deficiency was covered by his father's devotion to her, by her appearance of being already one of the family. Mr. Tester was away as he might be away if they were already married.

VI.

IN October I met him at Doubleton; we spent three days there together. He was enjoying his respite, as he didn't scruple to tell me, and he talked to me a great deal—as usual—about Lady

Vandeleur. He didn't mention Joscelind, except by implication, in this assurance of how much he valued his weeks of grace.

"Do you mean to say that, under the circumstances, Lady Vandeleur is willing to marry you?"

I made this inquiry more expressively, doubtless, than before; for when we had talked of the matter then he had naturally spoken of her consent as a simple contingency. It was contingent upon the lapse of the first months of her bereavement; it was not a question he could begin to press a few days after her husband's death.

"Not immediately, of course, but if I wait I think so." That, I remember, was his answer.

"If you wait till you get rid of that poor girl, of course."

"She knows nothing about that—it's none of her business."

"Do you mean to say she doesn't know you are engaged?"

"How should she know it, how should she believe it, when she sees how I love her?" the young man exclaimed; but he admitted afterwards that he had not deceived her, and that she rendered full justice to the motives that had determined him. He thought he could answer for it that she would marry him some day or other.

"Then she is a very cruel woman," I said, "and I should like, if you please, to hear no more about her." He protested against this, and, a month later, brought her up again, for a purpose. The purpose, you will see, was a very strange

one. I had then come back to town; it was the early part of December. I supposed he was hunting, with his own hounds; but he appeared one afternoon in my drawing-room and told me I should do him a great favour if I would go and see Lady Vandeleur.

"Go and see her? where do you mean, in Norfolk?"

"She has come up to London—didn't you know it? She has a lot of business. She will be kept here till Christmas; I wish you would go."

"Why should I go?" I asked. "Won't you be kept here till Christmas too, and isn't that company enough for her?"

"Upon my word, you are cruel," he said, "and it's a great shame of you, when a man is trying to do his duty and is behaving like a saint."

"Is that what you call saintly, spending all your time with Lady Vandeleur? I will tell you whom I think a saint, if you would like to know."

"You needn't tell me, I know it better than you. I haven't a word to say against her; only she is stupid and hasn't any perceptions. If I am stopping a bit in London you don't understand why; it's as if you hadn't any perceptions either! If I am here for a few days I know what I am about."

"Why should I understand?" I asked—not very candidly, because I should have been glad to. "It's your own affair, you know what you are about, as you say, and of course you have counted the cost."

"What cost do you mean? It's a pretty cost,

I can tell you." And then he tried to explain—if I would only enter into it, and not be so suspicious. He was in London for the express purpose of breaking off.

"Breaking off what—your engagement?"

"No, no, damn my engagement—the other thing. My acquaintance, my relations——"

"Your intimacy with Lady Van——?" It was not very gentle, but I believe I burst out laughing. "If this is the way you break off, pray, what would you do to keep up?"

He flushed, and looked both foolish and angry, for of course it was not very difficult to see my point. But he was—in a very clumsy manner of his own—trying to cultivate a good conscience, and he was getting no credit for it. "I suppose I may be allowed to look at her! It's a matter we have to talk over. One doesn't drop such a friend in half an hour."

"One doesn't drop her at all, unless one has the strength to make a sacrifice."

"It's easy for you to talk of sacrifice. You don't know what she is!" my visitor cried.

"I think I know what she is not. She is not a friend, as you call her, if she encourages you in the wrong, if she doesn't help you. No, I have no patience with her," I declared; "I don't like her, and I won't go to see her!"

Mr. Tester looked at me a moment, as if he were too vexed to trust himself to speak. He had to make an effort not to say something rude. That effort, however, he was capable of making, and though he held his hat as if he were going to

walk out of the house, he ended by staying, by putting it down again, by leaning his head, with his elbows on his knees, in his hands, and groaning out that he had never heard of anything so impossible, and that he was the most wretched man in England. I was very sorry for him, and of course I told him so; but privately I didn't think he stood up to his duty as he ought. I said to him, however, that if he would give me his word of honour that he would not abandon Miss Bernardstone, there was no trouble I wouldn't take to be of use to him. I didn't think Lady Vandeleur was behaving well. He must allow me to repeat that; but if going to see her would give him any pleasure (of course there was no question of pleasure for *her*) I would go fifty times. I couldn't imagine how it would help him, but I would do it, as I would do anything else he asked me. He didn't give me his word of honour, but he said quietly, "*I* shall go straight; you needn't be afraid;" and as he spoke there was honour enough in his face. This left an opening, of course, for another catastrophe. There might be further postponements, and poor Lady Emily, indignant for the first time in her life, might declare that her daughter's situation had become intolerable, and that they withdrew from the engagement. But this was too odious a chance, and I accepted Mr. Tester's assurance. He told me that the good I could do by going to see Lady Vandeleur was that it would cheer her up, in that dreary, big house in Upper Brook Street, where she was absolutely alone, with horrible

overalls on the furniture, and newspapers—actually newspapers—on the mirrors. She was seeing no one, there was no one to see; but he knew she would see me. I asked him if she knew, then, he was to speak to me of coming, and whether I might allude to him, whether it was not too delicate. I shall never forget his answer to this, nor the tone in which he made it, blushing a little and looking away. "Allude to me? Rather!" It was not the most fatuous speech I had ever heard; it had the effect of being the most modest; and it gave me an odd idea, and especially a new one, of the condition in which, at any time, one might be destined to find Lady Vandeleur. If she, too, were engaged in a struggle with her conscience (in this light they were an edifying pair!) it had perhaps changed her considerably, made her more approachable; and I reflected, ingeniously, that it probably had a humanising effect upon her. Ambrose Tester didn't go away after I had told him that I would comply with his request. He lingered, fidgeting with his stick and gloves, and I perceived that he had more to tell me, and that the real reason why he wished me to go and see Lady Vandeleur was not that she had newspapers on her mirrors. He came out with it at last, for that "Rather!" of his (with the way I took it) had broken the ice.

"You say you don't think she behaves well" (he naturally wished to defend her). "But I daresay you don't understand her position. Perhaps you wouldn't behave any better in her place."

"It's very good of you to imagine me there!" I remarked, laughing.

"It's awkward for me to say. One doesn't want to dot one's i's to that extent."

"She would be delighted to marry you. That's not such a mystery."

"Well, she likes me awfully," Mr. Tester said, looking like a handsome child. "It's not all on one side, it's on both. That's the difficulty."

"You mean she won't let you go?—she holds you fast?"

But the poor fellow had, in delicacy, said enough, and at this he jumped up. He stood there a moment, smoothing his hat; then he broke out again. "Please do this. Let her know—make her feel. You can bring it in, you know." And here he paused, embarrassed.

"What can I bring in, Mr. Tester? That's the difficulty, as you say."

"What you told me the other day. You know. What you have told me before."

"What I have told you . . .?"

"That it would put an end to Joscelind! If you can't work round to it, what's the good of being—you?" And with this tribute to my powers he took his departure.

VII.

It was all very well of him to be so flattering, but I really didn't see myself talking in that manner to Lady Vandeleur. I wondered why he didn't give her this information himself, and what par-

ticular value it could have as coming from me. Then I said to myself that of course he *had* mentioned to her the truth I had impressed upon him (and which by this time he had evidently taken home), but that to enable it to produce its full effect upon Lady Vandeleur the further testimony of a witness more independent was required. There was nothing for me but to go and see her, and I went the next day, fully conscious that to execute Mr. Tester's commission I should have either to find myself very brave or to find her strangely confidential; and fully prepared, also, not to be admitted. But she received me, and the house in Upper Brook Street was as dismal as Ambrose Tester had represented it. The December fog (the afternoon was very dusky) seemed to pervade the muffled rooms, and her ladyship's pink lamp-light to waste itself in the brown atmosphere. He had mentioned to me that the heir to the title (a cousin of her husband), who had left her unmolested for several months, was now taking possession of everything, so that what kept her in town was the business of her "turning out," and certain formalities connected with her dower. This was very ample, and the large provision made for her included the London house. She was very gracious on this occasion, but she certainly had remarkably little to say. Still, she was different, or, at any rate (having taken that hint), I saw her differently. I saw, indeed, that I had never quite done her justice, that I had exaggerated her stiffness, attributed to her a kind of conscious grandeur which was in

reality much more an accident of her appearance, of her figure, than a quality of her character. Her appearance is as grand as you know, and on the day I speak of, in her simplified mourning, under those vaguely-gleaming *lambris*, she looked as beautiful as a great white lily. She is very simple and good-natured ; she will never make an advance, but she will always respond to one, and I saw, that evening, that the way to get on with her was to treat her as if she were not too imposing. I saw also that, with her nun-like robes and languid eyes, she was a woman who might be immensely in love. All the same, we hadn't much to say to each other. She remarked that it was very kind of me to come, that she wondered how I could endure London at that season, that she had taken a drive and found the Park too dreadful, that she would ring for some more tea if I didn't like what she had given me. Our conversation wandered, stumbling a little, among these platitudes, but no allusion was made on either side to Ambrose Tester. Nevertheless, as I have said, she was different, though it was not till I got home that I phrased to myself what I had detected.

Then, recalling her white face, and the deeper, stranger expression of her beautiful eyes, I entertained myself with the idea that she was under the influence of "suppressed exaltation." The more I thought of her the more she appeared to me not natural; wound up, as it were, to a calmness beneath which there was a deal of agitation. This would have been nonsense if I had not, two days afterwards, received a note from her which

struck me as an absolutely "exalted" production. Not superficially, of course; to the casual eye it would have been perfectly commonplace. But this was precisely its peculiarity, that Lady Vandeleur should have written me a note which had no apparent point save that she should like to see me again, a desire for which she did succeed in assigning a reason. She reminded me that she was paying no calls, and she hoped I wouldn't stand on ceremony, but come in very soon again, she had enjoyed my visit so much. We had not been on note-writing terms, and there was nothing in that visit to alter our relations; moreover, six months before, she would not have dreamed of addressing me in that way. I was doubly convinced, therefore, that she was passing through a crisis—that she was not in her normal equilibrium. Mr. Tester had not reappeared since the occasion I have described at length, and I thought it possible he had been capable of the bravery of leaving town. I had, however, no fear of meeting him in Upper Brook Street; for, according to my theory of his relations with Lady Vandeleur he regularly spent his evenings with her, it being clear to me that they must dine together. I could answer her note only by going to see her the next day, when I found abundant confirmation of that idea about the crisis. I must confess to you in advance that I have never really understood her behaviour—never understood why she should have taken to me so suddenly—with whatever reserves, and however much by implication merely—into her confidence. All I can say is

that this is an accident to which one is exposed with English people, who, in my opinion, and contrary to common report, are the most demonstrative, the most expansive, the most gushing in the world. I think she felt rather isolated at this moment, and she had never had many intimates of her own sex. That sex, as a general thing, disapproved of her proceedings during the last few months, held that she was making Joscelind Bernardstone suffer too cruelly. She possibly felt the weight of this censure, and at all events was not above wishing some one to know that, whatever injury had fallen upon the girl to whom Mr. Tester had so stupidly engaged himself, had not, so far as she was concerned, been wantonly inflicted. I was there, I was more or less aware of her situation, and I would do as well as any one else.

She seemed really glad to see me, but she was very nervous. Nevertheless, nearly half an hour elapsed, and I was still wondering whether she had sent for me only to discuss the question of how a London house whose appointments had the stamp of a debased period (it had been thought very handsome in 1850) could be "done up" without being made æsthetic. I forget what satisfaction I gave her on this point; I was asking myself how I could work round in the manner prescribed by Joscelind's intended. At the last, however, to my extreme surprise, Lady Vandeleur herself relieved me of this effort.

"I think you know Mr. Tester rather well," she remarked abruptly, irrelevantly, and with a face

more conscious of the bearings of things than any I had ever seen her wear. On my confessing to such an acquaintance, she mentioned that Mr. Tester (who had been in London a few days—perhaps I had seen him) had left town and wouldn't come back for several weeks. This, for the moment, seemed to be all she had to communicate; but she sat looking at me from the corner of her sofa as if she wished me to profit in some way by the opportunity she had given me. Did she want help from outside, this proud, inscrutable woman, and was she reduced to throwing out signals of distress? Did she wish to be protected against herself—applauded for such efforts as she had already made? I didn't rush forward, I was not precipitate, for I felt that now, surely, I should be able at my convenience to execute my commission. What concerned me was not to prevent Lady Vandeleur's marrying Mr. Tester, but to prevent Mr. Tester's marrying her. In a few moments—with the same irrelevance—she announced to me that he wished to, and asked whether I didn't know it. I saw that this was my chance, and instantly with extreme energy, I exclaimed—

"Ah, for heaven's sake, don't listen to him! It would kill Miss Bernardstone!"

The tone of my voice made her colour a little, and she repeated, "Miss Bernardstone?"

"The girl he is engaged to—or has been—don't you know? Excuse me, I thought every one knew."

"Of course I know he is dreadfully entangled. He was fairly hunted down." Lady Vandeleur

was silent a moment, and then she added, with a strange smile, "Fancy, in such a situation, his wanting to marry me!"

"Fancy!" I replied. I was so struck with the oddity of her telling me her secrets that for the moment my indignation did not come to a head —my indignation, I mean, at her accusing poor Lady Emily (and even the girl herself) of having "trapped" our friend. Later I said to myself that I supposed she was within her literal right in abusing her rival, if she was trying sincerely to give him up. "I don't know anything about his having been hunted down," I said; "but this I do know, Lady Vandeleur, I assure you, that if he should throw Joscelind over she would simply go out like that!" And I snapped my fingers.

Lady Vandeleur listened to this serenely enough; she tried at least to take the air of a woman who has no need of new arguments. "Do you know her very well?" she asked, as if she had been struck by my calling Miss Bernardstone by her Christian name.

"Well enough to like her very much." I was going to say "to pity her;" but I thought better of it.

"She must be a person of very little spirit. If a man were to jilt me, I don't think I should go out!" cried her ladyship, with a laugh.

"Nothing is more probable than that she has not your courage or your wisdom. She may be weak, but she is passionately in love with him."

I looked straight into Lady Vandeleur's eyes

as I said this, and I was conscious that it was a tolerably good description of my hostess.

"Do you think she would really die?" she asked in a moment.

"Die as if one should stab her with a knife. Some people don't believe in broken hearts," I continued. "I didn't till I knew Joscelind Bernardstone; then I felt that she had one that wouldn't be proof."

"One ought to live—one ought always to live," said Lady Vandeleur; "and always to hold up one's head."

"Ah, I suppose that one oughtn't to feel at all, if one wishes to be a great success."

"What do you call a great success?" she asked.

"Never having occasion to be pitied."

"Being pitied? That must be odious!" she said; and I saw that though she might wish for admiration, she would never wish for sympathy. Then, in a moment, she added that men, in her opinion, were very base—a remark that was deep, but not, I think, very honest; that is, in so far as the purpose of it had been to give me the idea that Ambrose Tester had done nothing but press her, and she had done nothing but resist. They were very odd, the discrepancies in the statements of each of this pair; but it must be said for Lady Vandeleur that now that she had made up her mind (as I believed she had) to sacrifice herself, she really persuaded herself that she had not had a moment of weakness. She quite unbosomed herself, and I fairly assisted at her crisis. It appears that she had a conscience—very much so,

and even a high ideal of duty. She represented herself as moving heaven and earth to keep Ambrose Tester up to the mark, and you would never have guessed from what she told me that she had entertained, ever so faintly, the idea of marrying him. I am sure this was a dreadful perversion, but I forgave it on the score of that exaltation of which I have spoken. The things she said, and the way she said them, come back to me, and I thought that if she looked as handsome as that when she preached virtue to Mr. Tester, it was no wonder he liked the sermon to be going on perpetually.

"I daresay you know what old friends we are; but that doesn't make any difference, does it? Nothing would induce me to marry him—I haven't the smallest intention of marrying again. It is not a time for me to think of marrying, before his lordship has been dead six months. The girl is nothing to me; I know nothing about her, and I don't wish to know; but I should be very, very sorry if she were unhappy. He is the best friend I ever had, but I don't see that that's any reason I should marry him, do you?" Lady Vandeleur appealed to me, but without waiting for my answers, asking advice in spite of herself, and then remembering it was beneath her dignity to appear to be in need of it. "I have told him that if he doesn't act properly I shall never speak to him again. She's a charming girl, every one says, and I have no doubt she will make him perfectly happy. Men don't feel things like women, I think, and if they are coddled and

flattered they forget the rest. I have no doubt she is very sufficient for all that. For me, at any rate, once I see a thing in a certain way, I must abide by that. I think people are so dreadful —they do such horrible things. They don't seem to think what one's duty may be. I don't know whether you think much about that, but really one must at times, don't you think so? Every one is so selfish, and then, when they have never made an effort or a sacrifice themselves, they come to you and talk such a lot of hypocrisy. I know so much better than any one else whether I should marry or not. But I don't mind telling you that I don't see why I should. I am not in such a bad position—with my liberty and a decent maintenance."

In this manner she rambled on, gravely and communicatively, contradicting herself at times; not talking fast (she never did), but dropping one simple sentence, with an interval, after the other, with a certain richness of voice which always was part of the charm of her presence. She wished to be convinced against herself, and it was a comfort to her to hear herself argue. I was quite willing to be part of the audience, though I had to confine myself to very superficial remarks; for when I had said the event I feared would kill Miss Bernardstone I had said everything that was open to me. I had nothing to do with Lady Vandeleur's marrying, apart from that. I probably disappointed her. She had caught a glimpse of the moral beauty of self-sacrifice, of a certain ideal of conduct (I imagine it was rather new to

her), and would have been glad to elicit from me, as a person of some experience of life, an assurance that such joys are not unsubstantial. I had no wish to wind her up to a spiritual ecstasy from which she would inevitably descend again, and I let her deliver herself according to her humour, without attempting to answer for it that she would find renunciation the road to bliss. I believed that if she should give up Mr. Tester she would suffer accordingly; but I didn't think that a reason for not giving him up. Before I left her she said to me that nothing would induce her to do anything that she didn't think right. "It would be no pleasure to me, don't you see? I should be always thinking that another way would have been better. Nothing would induce me—nothing, nothing!"

VIII.

SHE protested too much, perhaps, but the event seemed to show that she was in earnest. I have described these two first visits of mine in some detail, but they were not the only ones I paid her. I saw her several times again, before she left town, and we became intimate, as London intimacies are measured. She ceased to protest (to my relief, for it made me nervous), she was very gentle, and gracious, and reasonable, and there was something in the way she looked and spoke that told me that for the present she found renunciation its own reward. So far, my scepticism was put to shame; her spiritual ecstasy maintained itself. If I could have foreseen then that it would maintain itself

till the present hour I should have felt that Lady Vandeleur's moral nature is finer indeed than mine. I heard from her that Mr. Tester remained at his father's, and that Lady Emily and her daughter were also there. The day for the wedding had been fixed, and the preparations were going rapidly forward. Meanwhile—she didn't tell me, but I gathered it from things she dropped—she was in almost daily correspondence with the young man. I thought this a strange concomitant of his bridal arrangements; but apparently, henceforth, they were bent on convincing each other that the torch of virtue lighted their steps, and they couldn't convince each other too much. She intimated to me that she had now effectually persuaded him (always by letter) that he would fail terribly if he should try to found his happiness on an injury done to another, and that of course she could never be happy (in a union with him) with the sight of his wretchedness before her. That a good deal of correspondence should be required to elucidate this is perhaps after all not remarkable. One day, when I was sitting with her (it was just before she left town), she suddenly burst into tears. Before we parted I said to her that there were several women in London I liked very much—that was common enough—but for her I had a positive respect, and that was rare. My respect continues still, and it sometimes makes me furious.

About the middle of January Ambrose Tester reappeared in town. He told me he came to bid me good-bye. He was going to be beheaded.

It was no use saying that old relations would be the same after a man was married; they would be different, everything would be different. I had wanted him to marry, and now I should see how I liked it. He didn't mention that I had also wanted him not to marry, and I was sure that if Lady Vandeleur had become his wife she would have been a much greater impediment to our harmless friendship than Joscelind Bernardstone would ever be. It took me but a short time to observe that he was in very much the same condition as Lady Vandeleur. He was finding how sweet it is to renounce, hand in hand with one we love. Upon him, too, the peace of the Lord had descended. He spoke of his father's delight at the nuptials being so near at hand; at the festivities that would take place in Dorsetshire when he should bring home his bride. The only allusion he made to what we had talked of the last time we were together was to exclaim suddenly, "How can I tell you how easy she has made it? She is so sweet, so noble! She really is a perfect creature!" I took for granted that he was talking of his future wife, but in a moment, as we were at cross-purposes, perceived that he meant Lady Vandeleur. This seemed to me really ominous—it stuck in my mind after he had left me. I was half tempted to write him a note, to say, "There is, after all, perhaps, something worse than your jilting Miss Bernardstone; and that is the danger that your rupture with Lady Vandeleur may become more of a bond than your marrying her would have been. For

heaven's sake, let your sacrifice *be* a sacrifice; keep it in its proper place!"

Of course I didn't write; even the slight responsibility I had already incurred began to frighten me, and I never saw Mr. Tester again till he was the husband of Joscelind Bernardstone. They have now been married some four years; they have two children, the elder of whom is, as he should be, a boy. Sir Edmund waited till his grandson had made good his place in the world, and then, feeling it was safe, he quietly, genially, surrendered his trust. He died, holding the hand of his daughter-in-law, and giving it doubtless a pressure which was an injunction to be brave. I don't know what he thought of the success of his plan for his son; but perhaps, after all, he saw nothing amiss, for Joscelind is the last woman in the world to have troubled him with her sorrows. From him, no doubt, she successfully concealed that bewilderment on which I have touched. You see I speak of her sorrows as if they were a matter of common recognition; certain it is that any one who meets her must see that she doesn't pass her life in joy. Lady Vandeleur, as you know, has never married again; she is still the most beautiful widow in England. She enjoys the esteem of every one, as well as the approbation of her conscience, for every one knows the sacrifice she made, knows that she was even more in love with Sir Ambrose than he was with her. She goes out again, of course, as of old, and she constantly meets the baronet and his wife. She is supposed to be even "very nice" to Lady Tester, and she

certainly treats her with exceeding civility. But you know (or perhaps you don't know) all the deadly things that, in London, may lie beneath that method. I don't in the least mean that Lady Vandeleur has any deadly intentions; she is a very good woman, and I am sure that in her heart she thinks she lets poor Joscelind off very easily. But the result of the whole situation is that Joscelind is in dreadful fear of her, for how can she help seeing that she has a very peculiar power over her husband? There couldn't have been a better occasion for observing the three together (if together it may be called, when Lady Tester is so completely outside) than those two days of ours at Doubleton. That's a house where they have met more than once before; I think she and Sir Ambrose like it. By "she" I mean, as he used to mean, Lady Vandeleur. You saw how Lady Tester was absolutely white with uneasiness. What can she do when she meets everywhere the implication that if two people in our time have distinguished themselves for their virtue, it is her husband and Lady Vandeleur? It is my impression that this pair are exceedingly happy. His marriage *has* made a difference, and I see him much less frequently and less intimately. But when I meet him I notice in him a kind of emanation of quiet bliss. Yes, they are certainly in felicity, they have trod the clouds together, they have soared into the blue, and they wear in their faces the glory of those altitudes. They encourage, they cheer, inspire, sustain each other; remind each other that they have chosen the better part.

Of course they have to meet for this purpose, and their interviews are filled, I am sure, with its sanctity. He holds up his head, as a man may who on a very critical occasion behaved like a perfect gentleman. It is only poor Joscelind that droops. Haven't I explained to you now why she doesn't understand?

1884.

A LIGHT MAN.

> "And I—what I seem to my friend, you see—
>   What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess.
> What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
>   No hero, I confess."
>
> *A Light Woman.—Browning's Men and Women.*

APRIL 4, 1857.—I have changed my sky without changing my mind. I resume these old notes in a new world. I hardly know of what use they are; but it's easier to stick to the habit than to drop it. I have been at home now a week—at home, forsooth! And yet, after all, it *is* home. I am dejected, I am bored, I am blue. How can a man be more at home than that? Nevertheless, I am the citizen of a great country, and for that matter, of a great city. I walked to-day some ten miles or so along Broadway, and, on the whole, I don't blush for my native land. We are a capable race and a good-looking withal; and I don't see why we shouldn't prosper as well as another. This, by the way, ought to be a very encouraging reflection. A capable fellow and a good-looking withal; I don't see why he shouldn't die a millionaire. At all events he must do something. When a man has, at thirty-two, a net income of considerably less than nothing, he can scarcely hope to

overtake a fortune before he himself is overtaken by age and philosophy—two deplorable impediments. I am afraid that one of them has already planted itself in my path. What am I? What do I wish? Whither do I tend? What do I believe? I am constantly beset by these impertinent whisperings. Formerly it was enough that I was Maximus Austin; that I was endowed with a cheerful mind and a good digestion; that one day or another, when I had come to the end, I should return to America and begin at the beginning; that, meanwhile, existence was sweet in—in the Rue Tronchet. But now! Has the sweetness really passed out of life? Have I eaten the plums and left nothing but the bread and milk and corn-starch, or whatever the horrible concoction is?—I had it to-day for dinner. Pleasure, at least, I imagine—pleasure pure and simple, pleasure crude, brutal, and vulgar—this poor flimsy delusion has lost all its charm. I shall never again care for certain things—nor indeed for certain persons. Of such things, of such persons, I firmly maintain, however, that I never was an enthusiastic votary. It would be more to my credit, I suppose, if I had been. More would be forgiven me if I had loved a little more, if into all my folly and egotism I had put a little more *naïveté* and sincerity. Well, I did the best I could; I was at once too bad and too good for it all. At present, it's far enough off; I have put the sea between us; I am stranded. I sit high and dry, scanning the horizon for a friendly sail, or waiting for a high tide to set me afloat.

The wave of pleasure has deposited me here in the sand. Shall I owe my rescue to the wave of pain? At moments I feel a kind of longing to expiate my stupid little sins. I see, as through a glass, darkly, the beauty of labour and love. Decidedly, I am willing to work. It's written.

7th.—My sail is in sight; it's at hand; I have all but boarded the vessel. I received this morning a letter from the best man in the world. Here it is:—

DEAR MAX—I see this very moment, in an old newspaper which had already passed through my hands without yielding up its most precious item, the announcement of your arrival in New York. To think of your having perhaps missed the welcome you had a right to expect from me! Here it is, dear Max—as cordial as you please. When I say I have just read of your arrival, I mean that twenty minutes have elapsed by the clock. These have been spent in conversation with my excellent friend, Mr. Sloane—we having taken the liberty of making you the topic. I haven't time to say more about Frederick Sloane than that he is very anxious to make your acquaintance, and that, if your time is not otherwise engaged, he would like you very much to spend a month with him. He is an excellent host, or I shouldn't be here myself. It appears that he knew your mother very intimately, and he has a taste for visiting the amenities of the parents upon the children; the original ground of my own connection with him was that he had been a particular friend of my father. You may have heard your mother speak of him. He is a very strange old fellow, but you will like him. Whether or no you come for his sake, come for mine.

Yours always, THEODORE LISLE.

Theodore's letter is of course very kind, but it's remarkably obscure. My mother may have had the highest regard for Mr. Sloane, but she never

mentioned his name in my hearing. Who is he, what is he, and what is the nature of his relations with Theodore? I shall learn betimes. I have written to Theodore that I gladly accept (I believe I suppressed the "gladly" though) his friend's invitation, and that I shall immediately present myself. What can I do that is better? Speaking sordidly, I shall obtain food and lodging while I look about me. I shall have a base of operations. D——, it appears, is a long day's journey, but enchanting when you reach it. I am curious to see an enchanting American town. And to stay a month! Mr. Frederick Sloane, whoever you are, *vous faites bien les choses*, and the little that I know of you is very much to your credit. You enjoyed the friendship of my dear mother, you possess the esteem of the virtuous Theodore, you commend yourself to my own affection. At this rate I shall not grudge it.

D——, 14*th*.—I have been here since Thursday evening—three days. As we rattled up to the tavern in the village I perceived from the top of the coach, in the twilight, Theodore beneath the porch, scanning the vehicle, with all his amiable disposition in his eyes. He has grown older, of course, in these five years, but less so than I had expected. His is one of those smooth, unwrinkled souls that keep their bodies fair and fresh. As tall as ever, moreover, and as lean and clean. How short and fat and dark and debauched he makes one feel! By nothing he says or means, of course, but merely by his old unconscious purity and simplicity—that slender straight-

ness which makes him remind you of the spire of an English abbey. He greeted me with smiles, and stares, and alarming blushes. He assures me that he never would have known me, and that five years have altered me—*sehr!* I asked him if it were for the better? He looked at me hard for a moment, with his eyes of blue, and then, for an answer, he blushed again.

On my arrival we agreed to walk over from the village. He dismissed his waggon with my luggage, and we went arm-in-arm through the dusk. The town is seated at the foot of certain mountains, whose names I have yet to learn, and at the head of a big sheet of water, which, as yet, too, I know only as "the Lake." The road hitherward soon leaves the village and wanders in rural loveliness by the margin of this expanse. Sometimes the water is hidden by clumps of trees, behind which we heard it lapping and gurgling in the darkness; sometimes it stretches out from your feet in shining vagueness, as if it were tired of making all day a million little eyes at the great stupid hills. The walk from the tavern takes some half-an-hour, and in this interval Theodore made his position a little more clear. Mr. Sloane is a rich old widower; his age is seventy-two, and, as his health is thoroughly broken, is practically even greater; and his fortune—Theodore, characteristically, doesn't know anything definite about that. It's probably about a million. He has lived much in Europe and in the "great world;" he has had adventures and passions and all that sort of thing; and now, in the evening of his days, like an old French

diplomatist, he takes it into his head to write his memoirs. To this end he has lured poor Theodore to his gruesome side, to mend his pens for him. He has been a great scribbler, says Theodore, all his days, and he proposes to incorporate a large amount of promiscuous literary matter into these *souvenirs intimes*. Theodore's principal function seems to be to get him to leave things out. In fact the poor youth seems troubled in conscience. His patron's lucubrations have taken the turn of many other memoirs, and have ceased to address themselves *virginibus puerisque*. On the whole, he declares they are a very odd mixture—a medley of gold and tinsel, of bad taste and good sense. I can readily understand it. The old man bores me, puzzles me, and amuses me.

He was in waiting to receive me. We found him in his library—which, by the way, is simply the most delightful apartment that I ever smoked a cigar in—a room arranged for a lifetime. At one end stands a great fireplace, with a florid, fantastic mantelpiece in carved white marble—an importation, of course, and, as one may say, an interpolation; the groundwork of the house, the "fixtures," being throughout plain, solid, and domestic. Over the mantel-shelf is a large landscape, a fine Gainsborough, full of the complicated harmonies of an English summer. Beneath it stands a row of bronzes of the Renaissance and potteries of the Orient. Facing the door, as you enter, is an immense window, set in a recess, with cushioned seats and large clear panes, stationed, as it were, at the very apex of the lake

(which forms an almost perfect oval) and commanding a view of its whole extent. At the other end, opposite the fireplace, the wall is studded from floor to ceiling with choice foreign paintings, placed in relief against the orthodox crimson screen. Elsewhere the place is covered with books, arranged neither in formal regularity nor quite helter-skelter, but in a sort of genial incongruity, which tells that sooner or later each volume feels sure of leaving the ranks and returning into different company. Mr. Sloane makes use of his books. His two passions, according to Theodore, are reading and talking; but to talk he must have a book in his hand. The charm of the room lies in the absence of certain pedantic tones—the browns, blacks, and grays—which distinguish most libraries. The apartment is of the feminine gender. There are half a dozen light colours scattered about—pink in the carpet, tender blue in the curtains, yellow in the chairs. The result is a general look of brightness and lightness; it expresses even a certain cynicism. You perceive the place to be the home, not of a man of learning, but of a man of fancy.

He rose from his chair—the man of fancy, to greet me—the man of fact. As I looked at him, in the lamplight, it seemed to me for the first five minutes that I had seldom seen an uglier little person. It took me five minutes to get the point of view; then I began to admire. He is diminutive, or, at best, of my own moderate stature, and bent and contracted with his seventy years; lean and delicate, moreover, and very highly finished.

He is curiously pale, with a kind of opaque yellow pallor. Literally, it's a magnificent yellow. His skin is of just the hue and apparent texture of some old crumpled Oriental scroll. I know a dozen painters who would give more than they have to arrive at the exact "tone" of his thick-veined, bloodless hands, his polished ivory knuckles. His eyes are circled with red, but in the battered little setting of their orbits they have the lustre of old sapphires. His nose, owing to the falling away of other portions of his face, has assumed a grotesque, unnatural prominence; it describes an immense arch, gleaming like a piece of parchment stretched on ivory. He has, apparently, all his teeth, but has swathed his cranium in a dead black wig; of course he's clean shaven. In his dress he has a muffled, wadded look and an apparent aversion to linen, inasmuch as none is visible on his person. He seems neat enough, but not fastidious. At first, as I say, I fancied him monstrously ugly; but, on further acquaintance, I perceived that what I had taken for ugliness is nothing but the incomplete remains of remarkable good looks. The line of his features is pure; his nose, *cæteris paribus*, would be extremely handsome; his eyes are the oldest eyes I ever saw, and yet they are wonderfully living. He has something remarkably insinuating.

He offered his two hands as Theodore introduced me; I gave him my own, and he stood smiling at me like some quaint old image in ivory and ebony, scanning my face with a curiosity which he took no pains to conceal. "God bless

me," he said at last, "how much you look like your father!" I sat down, and for half an hour we talked of many things—of my journey, of my impressions of America, of my reminiscences of Europe, and, by implication, of my prospects. His voice is weak and cracked, but he makes it express everything. Mr. Sloane is not yet in his dotage—oh no! He nevertheless makes himself out a poor creature. In reply to an inquiry of mine about his health, he favoured me with a long list of his infirmities (some of which are very trying, certainly) and assured me that he was quite finished.

"I live out of mere curiosity," he said.

"I have heard of people dying from the same motive."

He looked at me a moment, as if to ascertain whether I were laughing at him. And then, after a pause, "Perhaps you don't know that I disbelieve in a future life," he remarked, blandly.

At these words Theodore got up and walked to the fire.

"Well, we sha'n't quarrel about that," said I. Theodore turned round, staring.

"Do you mean that you agree with me?" the old man asked.

"I certainly haven't come here to talk theology! Don't ask me to disbelieve, and I'll never ask you to believe."

"Come," cried Mr. Sloane, rubbing his hands, "you'll not persuade me you are a Christian—like your friend Theodore there."

"Like Theodore—assuredly not." And then,

somehow, I don't know why, at the thought of Theodore's Christianity I burst into a laugh. "Excuse me, my dear fellow," I said, "you know, for the last ten years I have lived in pagan lands."

"What do you call pagan?" asked Theodore, smiling.

I saw the old man with his hands locked, eyeing me shrewdly, and waiting for my answer. I hesitated a moment, and then I said, "Everything that makes life tolerable!"

Hereupon Mr. Sloane began to laugh till he coughed. Verily, I thought, if he lives for curiosity, he's easily satisfied.

We went into dinner, and this repast showed me that some of his curiosity is culinary. I observed, by the way, that for a victim of neuralgia, dyspepsia, and a thousand other ills, Mr. Sloane plies a most inconsequent knife and fork. Sauces and spices and condiments seem to be the chief of his diet. After dinner he dismissed us, in consideration of my natural desire to see my friend in private. Theodore has capital quarters—a downy bedroom and a snug little *salon*. We talked till near midnight—of ourselves, of each other, and of the author of the memoirs, down stairs. That is, I spoke of myself, and Theodore listened; and then Theodore descanted upon Mr. Sloane, and I listened. His commerce with the old man has sharpened his wits. Sloane has taught him to observe and judge, and Theodore turns round, observes, judges—him! He has become quite the critic and analyst. There is something very pleasant in the discriminations of a conscientious mind;

in which criticism is tempered by an angelic charity. Only, it may easily end by acting on one's nerves. At midnight we repaired to the library, to take leave of our host till the morrow—an attention which, under all circumstances, he rigidly exacts. As I gave him my hand he held it again and looked at me as he had done on my arrival. "Bless my soul," he said at last, "how much you look like your mother!"

To-night, at the end of my third day, I begin to feel decidedly at home. The fact is, I am remarkably comfortable. The house is pervaded by an indefinable, irresistible air of luxury and privacy. Mr. Frederick Sloane is a horribly corrupt old mortal. Already, in his relaxing presence, I have become heartily reconciled to doing nothing. But with Theodore on one side—standing there like a tall interrogation-point—I honestly believe I can defy Mr. Sloane on the other. The former asked me this morning, with visible solicitude, in allusion to the bit of dialogue I have quoted above on matters of faith, whether I am really a materialist—whether I don't believe something? I told him I would believe anything he liked. He looked at me a while, in friendly sadness. "I hardly know whether you are not worse than Mr. Sloane," he said.

But Theodore is, after all, in duty bound to give a man a long rope in these matters. His own rope is one of the longest. He reads Voltaire with Mr. Sloane, and Emerson in his own room. He is the stronger man of the two; he has the larger stomach. Mr. Sloane delights, of course,

in Voltaire, but he can't read a line of Emerson. Theodore delights in Emerson, and enjoys Voltaire, though he thinks him superficial. It appears that since we parted in Paris, five years ago, his conscience has dwelt in many lands. *C'est toute une histoire*—which he tells very prettily. He left college determined to enter the church, and came abroad with his mind full of theology and Tübingen. He appears to have studied, not wisely, but too well. Instead of faith full-armed and serene, there sprang from the labour of his brain a myriad sickly questions, piping for answers. He went for a winter to Italy, where, I take it, he was not quite so much afflicted as he ought to have been at the sight of the beautiful spiritual repose that he had missed. It was after this that we spent those three months together in Brittany—the best-spent months of my long residence in Europe. Theodore inoculated me, I think, with some of his seriousness, and I just touched him with my profanity; and we agreed together that there were a few good things left—health, friendship, a summer sky, and the lovely byways of an old French province. He came home, searched the Scriptures once more, accepted a "call," and made an attempt to respond to it. But the inner voice failed him. His outlook was cheerless enough. During his absence his married sister, the elder one, had taken the other to live with her, relieving Theodore of the charge of contribution to her support. But suddenly, behold the husband, the brother-in-law, dies, leaving a mere figment of property; and the two ladies, with

their two little girls, are afloat in the wide world. Theodore finds himself at twenty-six without an income, without a profession, and with a family of four females to support. Well, in his quiet way he draws on his courage. The history of the two years that passed before he came to Mr. Sloane is really absolutely edifying. He rescued his sisters and nieces from the deep waters, placed them high and dry, established them somewhere in decent gentility—and then found at last that his strength had left him—had dropped dead, like an over-ridden horse. In short, he had worked himself to the bone. It was now his sisters' turn. They nursed him with all the added tenderness of gratitude for the past and terror of the future, and brought him safely through a grievous malady. Meanwhile Mr. Sloane, having decided to treat himself to a private secretary and suffered dreadful mischance in three successive experiments, had heard of Theodore's situation and his merits; had furthermore recognised in him the son of an early and intimate friend, and had finally offered him the very comfortable position he now occupies. There is a decided incongruity between Theodore as a man—as Theodore, in fine—and the dear fellow as the intellectual agent, confidant, complaisant, purveyor, pander—what you will—of a battered old cynic and dilettante—a worldling if there ever was one. There seems at first sight a perfect want of agreement between his character and his function. One is gold and the other brass, or something very like it. But, on reflection, I can enter into it—his having, under the

circumstances, accepted Mr. Sloane's offer and been content to do his duties. *Ce que c'est que de nous!* Theodore's contentment in such a case is a theme for the moralist—a better moralist than I. The best and purest mortals are an odd mixture, and in none of us does honesty exist on its own terms. Ideally, Theodore hasn't the smallest business *dans cette galère.* It offends my sense of propriety to find him here. I feel that I ought to notify him, as a friend, that he has knocked at the wrong door, and that he had better retreat before he is brought to the blush. However, I suppose he might as well be here as reading Emerson, "evenings," in the back parlour, to those two very ugly sisters—judging from their photographs. Practically it hurts no one not to be too much of a prig. Poor Theodore was weak, depressed, out of work. Mr. Sloane offers him a lodging and a salary in return for—after all, merely a little tact. All he has to do is to read to the old man, lay down the book a while, with his finger in the place, and let him talk; take it up again, read another dozen pages and submit to another commentary. Then to write a dozen pages under his dictation—to suggest a word, polish off a period, or help him out with a complicated idea or a half-remembered fact. This is all, I say; and yet this is much. Theodore's apparent success proves it to be much, as well as the old man's satisfaction. It is a part; he has to simulate. He has to "make believe" a little —a good deal; he has to put his pride in his pocket and send his conscience to the wash. He

has to be accommodating—to listen and pretend and flatter; and he does it as well as many a worse man—does it far better than I. I might bully the old man, but I don't think I could humour him. After all, however, it is not a matter of comparative merit. In every son of woman there are two men—the practical man and the dreamer. We live for our dreams—but, meanwhile, we live by our wits. When the dreamer is a poet, the other fellow is an artist. Theodore, at bottom, is only a man of taste. If he were not destined to become a high priest among moralists, he might be a prince among connoisseurs. He plays his part, therefore, artistically, with spirit, with originality, with all his native refinement. How can Mr. Sloane fail to believe that he possesses a paragon? He is no such fool as not to appreciate a *nature distinguée* when it comes in his way. He confidentially assured me this morning that Theodore has the most charming mind in the world, but that it's a pity he's so simple as not to suspect it. If he only doesn't ruin him with his flattery!

19*th.*—I am certainly fortunate among men. This morning when, tentatively, I spoke of going away, Mr. Sloane rose from his seat in horror and declared that for the present I must regard his house as my home. "Come, come," he said, "when you leave this place where do you intend to go?" Where, indeed? I graciously allowed Mr. Sloane to have the best of the argument. Theodore assures me that he appreciates these and other affabilities, and that I have made what

he calls a "conquest" of his venerable heart. Poor, battered, bamboozled old organ! he would have one believe that it has a most tragical record of capture and recapture. At all events, it appears that I am master of the citadel. For the present I have no wish to evacuate. I feel, nevertheless, in some far-off corner of my soul, that I ought to shoulder my victorious banner and advance to more fruitful triumphs.

I blush for my beastly laziness. It isn't that I am willing to stay here a month, but that I am willing to stay here six. Such is the charming, disgusting truth. Have I really outlived the age of energy? Have I survived my ambition, my integrity, my self-respect? Verily, I ought to have survived the habit of asking myself silly questions. I made up my mind long ago to go in for nothing but present success, and I don't care for that sufficiently to secure it at the cost of temporary suffering. I have a passion for nothing—not even for life. I know very well the appearance I make in the world. I pass for a clever, accomplished, capable, good-natured fellow, who can do anything if he would only try. I am supposed to be rather cultivated, to have latent talents. When I was younger I used to find a certain entertainment in the spectacle of human affairs. I liked to see men and women hurrying on each other's heels across the stage. But I am sick and tired of them now; not that I am a misanthrope, God forbid! They are not worth hating. I never knew but one creature who was, and her I went and loved. To be consistent, I

ought to have hated my mother, and now I ought to detest Theodore. But I don't—truly, on the whole, I don't—any more than I dote on him. I firmly believe that it makes a difference to him, his idea that I *am* fond of him. He believes in that, as he believes in all the rest of it—in my culture, my latent talents, my underlying "earnestness," my sense of beauty and love of truth. Oh, for a *man* among them all—a fellow with eyes in his head—eyes that would know me for what I am and let me see they had guessed it! Possibly such a fellow as that might get a "rise" out of me.

In the name of bread and butter, what am I to do? (I was obliged this morning to borrow fifty dollars from Theodore, who remembered gleefully that he has been owing me a trifling sum for the past four years, and in fact has preserved a note to this effect.) Within the last week I have hatched a desperate plan: I have made up my mind to take a wife—a rich one, *bien entendu.* Why not accept the goods of the gods? It is not my fault, after all, if I pass for a good fellow. Why not admit that practically, mechanically—as I may say—maritally, I *may* be a good fellow? I warrant myself kind. I should never beat my wife; I don't think I should even contradict her. Assume that her fortune has the proper number of zeros and that she herself is one of them, and I can even imagine her adoring me. I really think this is my only way. Curiously, as I look back upon my brief career, it all seems to tend to this consummation. It has its graceful curves and crooks,

indeed, and here and there a passionate tangent; but, on the whole, if I were to unfold it here *à la* Hogarth, what better legend could I scrawl beneath the series of pictures than So-and-so's Progress to a Mercenary Marriage?

Coming events do what we all know with their shadows. My noble fate is, perhaps, not far off. I already feel throughout my person a magnificent languor—as from the possession of many dollars. Or is it simply my sense of well-being in this perfectly appointed house? Is it simply the contact of the highest civilisation I have known? At all events, the place is of velvet, and my only complaint of Mr. Sloane is that, instead of an old widower, he's not an old widow (or a young maid), so that I might marry him, survive him, and dwell for ever in this rich and mellow home. As I write here, at my bedroom table, I have only to stretch out an arm and raise the window-curtain, to see the thick-planted garden budding and breathing and growing in the silvery silence. Far above, in the liquid darkness, rolls the brilliant ball of the moon; beneath, in its light, lies the lake, in murmuring, troubled sleep; round about, the mountains, looking strange and blanched, seem to bare their heads and undrape their shoulders. So much for midnight. To-morrow the scene will be lovely with the beauty of day. Under one aspect or another I have it always before me. At the end of the garden is moored a boat, in which Theodore and I have indulged in an immense deal of irregular navigation. What lovely landward coves and bays—what

alder-smothered creeks—what lily-sheeted pools—what sheer steep hillsides, making the water dark and quiet where they hang! I confess that in these excursions Theodore looks after the boat and I after the scenery. Mr. Sloane avoids the water—on account of the dampness, he says; because he's afraid of drowning, I suspect.

22d.—Theodore is right. The *bonhomme* has taken me into his favour. I protest I don't see how he was to escape it. *Je l'ai bien soigné*, as they say in Paris. I don't blush for it. In one coin or another I must repay his hospitality—which is certainly very liberal. Theodore dots his *i*'s, crosses his *t*'s, verifies his quotations; while I set traps for that famous "curiosity." This speaks vastly well for my powers. He pretends to be surprised at nothing, and to possess in perfection—poor, pitiable old fop—the art of keeping his countenance; but repeatedly, I know, I have made him stare. As for his corruption, which I spoke of above, it's a very pretty piece of wickedness, but it strikes me as a purely intellectual matter. I imagine him never to have had any positive senses. He may have been unclean; morally, he's not very tidy now; but he never can have been what the French call a *viveur*. He's too delicate, he's of a feminine turn; and what woman was ever a *viveur?* He likes to sit in his chair and read scandal, talk scandal, make scandal, so far as he may without catching a cold or bringing on a headache. I already feel as if I had known him a lifetime. I read him as clearly as if I had. I know the type to which he

belongs; I have encountered, first and last, a good many specimens of it. He's neither more nor less than a gossip—a gossip flanked by a coxcomb and an egotist. He's shallow, vain, cold, superstitious, timid, pretentious, capricious: a pretty list of foibles! And yet, for all this, he has his good points. His caprices are sometimes generous, and his rebellion against the ugliness of life frequently makes him do kind things. His memory (for trifles) is remarkable, and (where his own performances are not involved) his taste is excellent. He has no courage for evil, more than for good. He is the victim, however, of more illusions with regard to himself than I ever knew a single brain to shelter. At the age of twenty, poor, ignorant, and remarkably handsome, he married a woman of immense wealth, many years his senior. At the end of three years she very considerately took herself off and left him to the enjoyment of his freedom and riches. If he had remained poor he might from time to time have rubbed at random against the truth, and would be able to recognise the touch of it. But he wraps himself in his money as in a wadded dressing-gown, and goes trundling through life on his little gold wheels. The greater part of his career, from the time of his marriage till about ten years ago, was spent in Europe, which, superficially, he knows very well. He has lived in fifty places, known thousands of people, and spent a very large fortune. At one time, I believe, he spent considerably too much, trembled for an instant on the verge of a pecuniary crash, but

recovered himself, and found himself more frightened than hurt, yet audibly recommended to lower his pitch. He passed five years in a species of penitent seclusion on the lake of—I forget what (his genius seems to be partial to lakes), and laid the basis of his present magnificent taste for literature. I can't call him anything but magnificent in this respect, so long as he must have his punctuation done by a *nature distinguée.* At the close of this period, by economy, he had made up his losses. His turning the screw during those relatively impecunious years represents, I am pretty sure, the only act of resolution of his life. It was rendered possible by his morbid, his actually pusillanimous dread of poverty; he doesn't feel safe without half a million between him and starvation. Meanwhile he had turned from a young man into an old man; his health was broken, his spirit was jaded, and I imagine, to do him justice, that he began to feel certain natural, filial longings for this dear American mother of us all. They say the most hopeless truants and triflers have come to it. He came to it, at all events; he packed up his books and pictures and gimcracks, and bade farewell to Europe. This house which he now occupies belonged to his wife's estate. She had, for sentimental reasons of her own, commended it to his particular care. On his return he came to see it, liked it, turned a parcel of carpenters and upholsterers into it, and by inhabiting it for nine years transformed it into the perfect dwelling which I find it. Here he has spent all his time, with the

exception of a usual winter's visit to New York—a practice recently discontinued, owing to the increase of his ailments and the projection of these famous memoirs. His life has finally come to be passed in comparative solitude. He tells of various distant relatives, as well as intimate friends of both sexes, who used formerly to be entertained at his cost; but with each of them, in the course of time, he seems to have succeeded in quarrelling. Throughout life, evidently, he has had capital fingers for plucking off parasites. Rich, lonely, and vain, he must have been fair game for the race of social sycophants and cormorants; and it's much to the credit of his sharpness, and that instinct of self-defence which nature bestows even on the weak, that he has not been despoiled and *exploité*. Apparently they have all been bunglers. I maintain that something is to be done with him still. But one must work in obedience to certain definite laws. Doctor Jones, his physician, tells me that, in point of fact, he has had for the past ten years an unbroken series of favourites, *protégés*, heirs presumptive; but that each, in turn, by some fatally false movement, has spilled his pottage. The doctor declares, moreover, that they were mostly very common people. Gradually the old man seems to have developed a preference for two or three strictly exquisite intimates, over a throng of your vulgar pensioners. His tardy literary schemes, too—fruit of his all but sapless senility—have absorbed more and more of his time and attention. The end of it all is, therefore, that Theodore and

I have him quite to ourselves, and that it behoves us to hold our porringers straight.

Poor, pretentious old simpleton! It's not his fault, after all, that he fancies himself a great little man. How are you to judge of the stature of mankind when men have for ever addressed you on their knees? Peace and joy to his innocent fatuity! He believes himself the most rational of men; in fact, he's the most superstitious. He fancies himself a philosopher, an inquirer, a discoverer. He has not yet discovered that he is a humbug, that Theodore is a prig, and that I am an adventurer. He prides himself on his good manners, his urbanity, his knowing a rule of conduct for every occasion in life. My private impression is that his skinny old bosom contains unsuspected treasures of impertinence. He takes his stand on his speculative audacity—his direct, undaunted gaze at the universe; in truth, his mind is haunted by a hundred dingy old-world spectres and theological phantasms. He imagines himself one of the most solid of men; he is essentially one of the hollowest. He thinks himself ardent, impulsive, passionate, magnanimous—capable of boundless enthusiasm for an idea or a sentiment. It is clear to me that on no occasion of disinterested action can he ever have done anything in time. He believes, finally, that he has drained the cup of life to the dregs; that he has known, in its bitterest intensity, every emotion of which the human spirit is capable; that he has loved, struggled, suffered. Mere vanity, all of it. He has never loved any one

but himself; he has never suffered from anything but an undigested supper or an exploded pretension; he has never touched with the end of his lips the vulgar bowl from which the mass of mankind quaffs its floods of joy and sorrow. Well, the long and short of it all is, that I honestly pity him. He may have given sly knocks in his life, but he can't hurt any one now. I pity his ignorance, his weakness, his pusillanimity. He has tasted the real sweetness of life no more than its bitterness; he has never dreamed, nor experimented, nor dared; he has never known any but mercenary affection; neither men nor women have risked ought for *him*—for his good spirits, his good looks, his empty pockets. How I should like to give him, for once, a real sensation!

26th.—I took a row this morning with Theodore a couple of miles along the lake, to a point where we went ashore and lounged away an hour in the sunshine, which is still very comfortable. Poor Theodore seems troubled about many things. For one, he is troubled about me; he is actually more anxious about my future than I myself; he thinks better of me than I do of myself; he is so deucedly conscientious, so scrupulous, so averse to giving offence or to *brusquer* any situation before it has played itself out, that he shrinks from betraying his apprehensions or asking direct questions. But I know that he would like very much to extract from me some intimation that there is something under the sun I should like to do. I catch myself in the act of taking—heaven forgive me!—a half-malignant joy in confounding

his expectations—leading his generous sympathies off the scent by giving him momentary glimpses of my latent wickedness. But in Theodore I have so firm a friend that I shall have a considerable job if I ever find it needful to make him change his mind about me. He admires me—that's absolute; he takes my low moral tone for an eccentricity of genius, and it only imparts an extra flavour—a *haut goût*—to the charm of my intercourse. Nevertheless, I can see that he is disappointed. I have even less to show, after all these years, than he had hoped. Heaven help us, little enough it must strike him as being! What a contradiction there is in our being friends at all! I believe we shall end with hating each other. It's all very well now—our agreeing to differ, for we haven't opposed interests. But if we should *really* clash, the situation would be warm! I wonder, as it is, that Theodore keeps his patience with me. His education since we parted should tend logically to make him despise me. He has studied, thought, suffered, loved—loved those very plain sisters and nieces. Poor me! how should I be virtuous? I have no sisters, plain or pretty! —nothing to love, work for, live for. My good Theodore, if you are going one of these days to despise me and drop me—in the name of comfort, come to the point at once, and make an end of our state of tension.

He is troubled, too, about Mr. Sloane. His attitude towards the *bonhomme* quite passes my comprehension. It's the queerest jumble of contraries. He penetrates him, disapproves of

him—yet respects and admires him. It all comes of the poor boy's shrinking New England conscience. He's afraid to give his perceptions a fair chance, lest, forsooth, they should look over his neighbour's wall. He'll not understand that he may as well sacrifice the old reprobate for a lamb as for a sheep. His view of the gentleman, therefore, is a perfect tissue of cobwebs—a jumble of half-way sorrows, and wire-drawn charities, and hair-breadth 'scapes from utter damnation, and sudden platitudes of generosity—fit, all of it, to make an angel curse!

"The man's a perfect egotist and ass," say I, "but I like him." Now Theodore likes him—or rather wants to like him; but he can't reconcile it to his self-respect—fastidious deity!—to like an ass. Why the deuce can't he leave it alone altogether? It's a purely practical matter. He ought to do the duties of his place all the better for having his head clear of officious sentiment. I don't believe in disinterested service; and Theodore is too desperately bent on preserving his disinterestedness. With me it's different. I am perfectly free to love the *bonhomme*—for an ass. I am neither a scribe nor a Pharisee; I am simply a student of the art of life.

And then, Theodore is troubled about his sisters; he's afraid he's not doing his duty by them. He thinks he ought to be with them—to be getting a larger salary—to be teaching his nieces. I am not versed in such questions. Perhaps he ought!

May 3d.—This morning Theodore sent me word that he was ill and unable to get up; upon

which I immediately went in to see him. He had caught cold, was sick and a little feverish. I urged him to make no attempt to leave his room, and assured him that I would do what I could to reconcile Mr. Sloane to his absence. This I found an easy matter. I read to him for a couple of hours, wrote four letters—one in French—and then talked for a while—a good while. I have done more talking, by the way, in the last fortnight than in any previous twelve months—much of it, too, none of the wisest, nor, I may add, of the most superstitiously veracious. In a little discussion, two or three days ago, with Theodore, I came to the point and let him know that in gossiping with Mr. Sloane I made no scruple, for our common satisfaction, of "colouring" more or less. My confession gave him "that turn," as Mrs. Gamp would say, that his present illness may be the result of it. Nevertheless, poor dear fellow, I trust he will be on his legs to-morrow. This afternoon, somehow, I found myself really in the humour of talking. There was something propitious in the circumstances: a hard, cold rain without, a wood-fire in the library, the *bonhomme* puffing cigarettes in his arm-chair, beside him a portfolio of newly-imported prints and photographs, and—Theodore tucked safely away in bed. Finally, when I brought our *tête-à-tête* to a close (taking good care not to overstay my welcome) Mr. Sloane seized me by both hands and honoured me with one of his venerable grins. "Max," he said—"you must let me call you Max—you are the most delightful man I ever knew."

Verily, there's some virtue left in me yet. I believe I almost blushed.

"Why didn't I know you ten years ago?" the old man went on. "There are ten years lost."

"Ten years ago I was not worth your knowing," Max remarked.

"But I did know you!" cried the *bonhomme*. "I knew you in knowing your mother."

Ah! my mother again. When the old man begins that chapter it's all I can do not to tell him to blow out his candle and go to bed.

"At all events," he continued, "we must make the most of the years that remain. I am a rotten old carcass, but I have no intention of dying. You won't get tired of me and want to go away?"

"I am devoted to you, sir," I said. "But I must be looking for some occupation, you know."

"Occupation? bother! I will give you occupation. I will give you wages."

"I am afraid that you will want to give me the wages without the work." And then I declared that I must go up and look at poor Theodore.

The *bonhomme* still kept my hands. "I wish very much that I could get you to be as fond of me as you are of poor Theodore."

"Ah, don't talk about fondness, Mr. Sloane. I don't deal much in that article."

"Don't you like my secretary?"

"Not as he deserves."

"Nor as he likes you, perhaps?"

"He likes me more than I deserve."

"Well, Max," my host pursued, "we can be good friends all the same. We don't need a

hocus-pocus of false sentiment. We are *men*, aren't we?—men of sublime good sense." And just here, as the old man looked at me, the pressure of his hands deepened to a convulsive grasp, and the bloodless mask of his countenance was suddenly distorted with a nameless fear. "Ah, my dear young man," he cried, "come and be a son to me—the son of my age and desolation! For God's sake, don't leave me to pine and die alone!"

I was greatly surprised, and I may add considerably moved. Is it true, then, that this dilapidated organism contains such measureless depths of sensibility? He has evidently a mortal fear of death. I assured him on my honour that he may henceforth call upon me for any service.

8th.—Theodore's little turn proved more serious than I expected. He has been confined to his room till to-day. This evening he came down to the library in his dressing-gown. Decidedly, Mr. Sloane is an eccentric, but hardly, as Theodore thinks, a superior one. There is something extremely curious in his humours and caprices—the incongruous fits and starts, as it were, of his taste. For some reason, best known to himself, he took it into his head to regard it as a want of delicacy, of respect, of *savoir-vivre*—of heaven knows what—that poor Theodore, who is still weak and languid, should enter the sacred precinct of his study in the vulgar drapery of a dressing-gown. The sovereign trouble with the *bonhomme* is an absolute lack of the instinct of justice. He's of the real feminine turn —I believe I have written it before—without the

redeeming fidelity of the sex. I honestly believe that I might come into his study in my night-shirt and he would smile at it as a picturesque *déshabillé*. But for poor Theodore to-night there was nothing but scowls and frowns, and barely a civil inquiry about his health. But poor Theodore is not such a fool, either; he will not die of a snubbing; I never said he was a weakling. Once he fairly saw from what quarter the wind blew he bore the master's brutality with the utmost coolness and gallantry. Can it be that Mr. Sloane really wishes to drop him? The delicious old brute! He understands favour and friendship only as a selfish rapture—a reaction, an infatuation, an act of aggressive, exclusive patronage. It's not a bestowal, with him, but a transfer, and half his pleasure in causing his sun to shine is that—being wofully near its setting—it will produce certain long fantastic shadows. He wants to cast my shadow, I suppose, over Theodore; but fortunately I am not altogether an opaque body. Since Theodore was taken ill he has been into his room but once, and has sent him none but a dry little message or two. I too have been much less attentive than I should have wished to be; but my time has not been my own. It has been, every moment of it, at the disposal of my host. He actually runs after me, he clings to me, he makes a fool of himself, and is trying hard to make one of me. I find that he will bear—that, in fact, he actually enjoys—a sort of unexpected contradiction. He likes anything that will tickle his fancy, give an unusual tone to our relations, remind him of certain historical

characters whom he thinks he resembles. I have stepped into Theodore's shoes, and done—with what I feel in my bones to be very inferior skill and taste—all the reading, writing, condensing, transcribing and advising that he has been accustomed to do. I have driven with the *bonhomme*, played chess and cribbage with him, beaten him, bullied him, contradicted him, forced him into going out on the water under my charge. Who shall say, after this, that I haven't done my best to discourage his advances, put myself in a bad light? As yet, my efforts are vain; in fact, they quite turn to my own confusion. Mr. Sloane is so thankful at having escaped from the lake with his life that he looks upon me as a preserver and protector. Confound it all; it's a bore! But one thing is certain, it can't last for ever. Admit that he *has* cast Theodore out and taken me in: he will speedily discover that he has made a pretty mess of it, and that he had much better have left well enough alone. He likes my reading and writing now, but in a month he will begin to hate them. He will miss Theodore's better temper and better knowledge—his healthy impersonal judgment. What an advantage that well-regulated youth has over me, after all! I am for days, he is for years; he for the long run, I for the short. I, perhaps, am intended for success, but he is adapted for happiness. He has in his heart a tiny, sacred particle which leavens his whole being and keeps it pure and sound—a faculty of admiration and respect. For him human nature is still a wonder and a mystery; it bears a divine

stamp—Mr. Sloane's tawdry composition as well as the rest.

13*th.*—I have refused, of course, to supplant Theodore further in the exercise of his functions, and he has resumed his morning labours with Mr. Sloane. I, on my side, have spent these dewy hours in scouring the country on that capital black mare, the use of which is one of the perquisites of Theodore's place. The days have been magnificent —the heat of the sun tempered by a murmuring, wandering wind, the whole north a mighty ecstasy of sound and verdure, the sky a far-away vault of warm blue air. Not far from the mill at M——, the other end of the lake, I met, for the third time, that very pretty girl who reminds me so forcibly of Antoinette. She makes so lavish a use of her eyes that I ventured to stop and bid her good-morning. She seems nothing loath to an acquaintance. She's a fearful barbarian in speech, but the eyes are quite articulate. These rides do me good; I was growing too pensive.

There is something the matter with Theodore; his illness seems to have left him strangely affected. He has fits of silent stiffness, alternating with spasms of extravagant gaiety. He avoids me at times for hours together, and then he comes and looks at me with an inscrutable smile, as if he were on the verge of a burst of confidence—which again is swallowed up in the immensity of his dumbness. Is he hatching some astounding benefit to his species? Is he working to bring about my removal to a higher sphere of action? *Nous verrons bien.*

18*th.*—Theodore threatens departure. He received this morning a letter from one of his sisters —the young Dora—announcing her engagement to a clergyman whose acquaintance she has recently made, and intimating her expectation of an immediate union with the gentleman—a ceremony which would require Theodore's attendance. Theodore, in high good humour, read the letter aloud at breakfast—and, to tell the truth, it was a charming epistle. He then spoke of his having to go on to the wedding, a proposition to which Mr. Sloane graciously assented—much more than assented. "I shall be sorry to lose you, after so happy a connection," said the old man. Theodore turned pale, stared a moment, and then, recovering his colour and his composure, declared that he should have no objection in life to coming back.

"Bless your soul!" cried the *bonhomme*, "you don't mean to say you will leave your other sister all alone?"

To which Theodore replied that he would arrange for her and her little girl to live with the married pair. "It's the only proper thing," he remarked, as if it were quite settled. Has it come to this, then, that Mr. Sloane actually wants to turn him out of the house? The shameless old villain! He keeps smiling an uncanny smile, which means, as I read it, that if the poor young man once departs he shall never return on the old footing—for all his impudence!

20*th.*—This morning, at breakfast, we had a terrific scene. A letter arrives for Theodore; he opens it, turns white and red, frowns, falters, and

then informs us that the young Dora has broken off her engagement. No wedding, therefore, and no departure for Theodore. The old man was furious. In his fury he took the liberty of calling the *belle capricieuse* a very exaggerated name. Theodore rebuked him, with perfect good taste, and kept his temper.

"If my opinions don't suit you, Mr. Lisle," the old man broke out, "and my mode of expressing them displeases you, you know you can easily protect yourself."

"My dear Mr. Sloane," said Theodore, "your opinions, as a general thing, interest me deeply, and have never ceased to act beneficially upon the formation of my own. Your mode of expressing them is always brilliant, and I wouldn't for the world, after all our pleasant intercourse, separate from you in bitterness. Only, I repeat, your qualification of my sister's conduct is quite too precipitate. If you knew her, you would be the first to admit it."

There was something in Theodore's look and manner, as he said these words, which puzzled me all the morning. After dinner, finding myself alone with him, I told him I was glad he was not obliged to go away. He looked at me with the mysterious smile I have mentioned, thanked me, and fell into meditation. As this bescribbled chronicle is the record of my *bêtises* as well as my happy strokes, I needn't hesitate to say that for a moment I was a good deal vexed. What business has this angel of candour to deal in signs and portents, to look unutterable things? What right

has he to do so with me especially, in whom he has always professed an absolute confidence? Just as I was about to cry out, "Come, my dear fellow, this affectation of mystery has lasted quite long enough—favour me at last with the result of your cogitations!"—as I was on the point of thus expressing my impatience of his ominous behaviour, the oracle at last addressed itself to utterance.

"You see, my dear Max," he said, "I can't, in justice to myself, go away in obedience to the sort of notice that was served on me this morning. What do you think of my actual footing here?"

Theodore's actual footing here seems to me impossible; of course I said so.

"No, I assure you it's not," he answered. "I should, on the contrary, feel very uncomfortable to think that I had come away, except by my own choice. You see a man can't afford to cheapen himself. What are you laughing at?"

"I am laughing, in the first place, my dear fellow, to hear on your lips the language of cold calculation; and, in the second place, at your odd notion of the process by which a man keeps himself up in the market."

"I assure you it's the correct system. I came here as a particular favour to Mr. Sloane; it was expressly understood so. The sort of work was odious to me; I had regularly to break myself in. I had to trample on my convictions, preferences, prejudices. I don't take such things easily; I take them hard; and when once the effort has been made I can't consent to have it wasted. If Mr. Sloane needed me then, he needs me still. I am

ignorant of any change having taken place in his intentions, or in his means of satisfying them. I came, not to amuse him, but to do a certain work; I hope to remain until the work is completed. To go away sooner is to make a confession of incapacity which, I protest, costs me too much. I am too conceited, if you like."

Theodore spoke these words with a face which I have never seen him wear—a fixed, mechanical smile, a hard, dry glitter in his eye, a harsh, strident tone in his voice—in his whole physiognomy a gleam, as it were, a note of defiance. Now I confess that for defiance I have never been conscious of an especial relish—when I am defied I am beastly. "My dear man," I replied, "your sentiments do you prodigious credit. Your very ingenious theory of your present situation, as well as your extremely pronounced sense of your personal value, are calculated to insure you a degree of practical success which can very well dispense with the furtherance of my poor good wishes." Oh, the grimness of his visage as he listened to this, and, I suppose I may add, the grimness of mine! But I have ceased to be puzzled. Theodore's conduct for the past ten days is suddenly illumined with a backward, lurid ray. I will note down here a few plain truths which it behoves me to take to heart—commit to memory. Theodore is jealous of Maximus Austin. Theodore hates the said Maximus. Theodore has been seeking for the past three months to see his name written, last but not least, in a certain testamentary document: "Finally, I bequeath to my dear

young friend, Theodore Lisle, in return for invaluable services and unfailing devotion, the bulk of my property, real and personal, consisting of——" (hereupon follows an exhaustive enumeration of houses, lands, public securities, books, pictures, horses and dogs). It is for this that he has toiled and watched and prayed; submitted to intellectual weariness and spiritual torture; accommodated himself to levity, blasphemy and insult. For this he sets his teeth and tightens his grasp; for this he'll fight. Dear me, it's an immense weight off one's mind! There are nothing, then, but vulgar, common laws; no sublime exceptions, no transcendent anomalies. Theodore's a knave, a hypo——nay, nay; stay, irreverent hand!—Theodore's a *man!* Well, that's all I want. *He* wants fight—he shall have it. Have I got, at last, my simple, natural emotion?

21*st.*—I have lost no time. This evening, late, after I had heard Theodore go to his room (I had left the library early, on the pretext of having letters to write), I repaired to Mr. Sloane, who had not yet gone to bed, and informed him I should be obliged to leave him at once, and pick up a subsistence somehow in New York. He felt the blow; it brought him straight down on his marrow-bones. He went through the whole gamut of his arts and graces; he blustered, whimpered, entreated, flattered. He tried to drag in Theodore's name; but this, of course, I prevented. But, finally, why, *why*, WHY, after all my promises of fidelity, must I thus cruelly desert him? Then came my trump card: I have spent

my last penny; while I stay, I'm a beggar. The remainder of this extraordinary scene I have no power to describe: how the *bonhomme*, touched, inflamed, inspired, by the thought of my destitution, and at the same time annoyed, perplexed, bewildered at having to commit himself to doing anything for me, worked himself into a nervous frenzy which deprived him of a clear sense of the value of his words and his actions; how I, prompted by the irresistible spirit of my desire to leap astride of his weakness and ride it hard to the goal of my dreams, cunningly contrived to keep his spirit at the fever-point, so that strength and reason and resistance should burn themselves out. I shall probably never again have such a sensation as I enjoyed to-night—actually feel a heated human heart throbbing and turning and struggling in my grasp; know its pants, its spasms, its convulsions, and its final senseless quiescence. At half-past one o'clock Mr. Sloane got out of his chair, went to his secretary, opened a private drawer, and took out a folded paper. "This is my will, made some seven weeks ago. If you will stay with me I will destroy it."

"Really, Mr. Sloane," I said, "if you think my purpose is to exert any pressure upon your testamentary inclinations——"

"I will tear it in pieces," he cried; "I will burn it up! I shall be as sick as a dog to-morrow; but I will do it. A-a-h!"

He clapped his hand to his side, as if in sudden, overwhelming pain, and sank back, fainting, into his chair. A single glance assured me that he

was unconscious. I possessed myself of the paper, opened it, and perceived that he had left everything to his saintly secretary. For an instant a savage, puerile feeling of hate popped up in my bosom, and I came within a hair's-breadth of obeying my foremost impulse—that of stuffing the document into the fire. Fortunately, my reason overtook my passion, though for a moment it was an even race. I put the paper back into the bureau, closed it, and rang the bell for Robert (the old man's servant). Before he came I stood watching the poor, pale remnant of mortality before me, and wondering whether those feeble life-gasps were numbered. He was as white as a sheet, grimacing with pain—horribly ugly. Suddenly he opened his eyes; they met my own; I fell on my knees and took his hands. They closed on mine with a grasp strangely akin to the rigidity of death. Nevertheless, since then he has revived, and has relapsed again into a comparatively healthy sleep. Robert seems to know how to deal with him.

22d.—Mr. Sloane is seriously ill—out of his mind and unconscious of people's identity. The doctor has been here, off and on, all day, but this evening reports improvement. I have kept out of the old man's room, and confined myself to my own, reflecting largely upon the chance of his immediate death. Does Theodore know of the will? Would it occur to him to divide the property? Would it occur to me, in his place? We met at dinner, and talked in a grave, desultory, friendly fashion. After all, he's an excellent

fellow. I don't hate him. I don't even dislike him. He jars on me, *il m'agace ;* but that's no reason why I should do him an evil turn. Nor shall I. The property is a fixed idea, that's all. I shall get it if I can. We are fairly matched. Before heaven, no, we are not fairly matched! Theodore has a conscience.

23*d.*—I am restless and nervous—and for good reasons. Scribbling here keeps me quiet. This morning Mr. Sloane is better ; feeble and uncertain in mind, but unmistakably on the rise. I may confess now that I feel relieved of a horrid burden. Last night I hardly slept a wink. I lay awake listening to the pendulum of my clock. It seemed to say, "He lives—he dies." I fully expected to hear it stop suddenly at *dies.* But it kept going all the morning, and to a decidedly more lively tune. In the afternoon the old man sent for me. I found him in his great muffled bed, with his face the colour of damp chalk, and his eyes glowing faintly, like torches half stamped out. I was forcibly struck with the utter loneliness of his lot. For all human attendance my villainous self grinning at his bedside and old Robert without, listening, doubtless, at the keyhole. The *bonhomme* stared at me stupidly ; then seemed to know me, and greeted me with a sickly smile. It was some moments before he was able to speak. At last he faintly bade me to descend into the library, open the secret drawer of the secretary (which he contrived to direct me how to do), possess myself of his will, and burn it up. He appears to have forgotten his having taken it out

the night before last. I told him that I had an insurmountable aversion to any personal dealings with the document. He smiled, patted the back of my hand, and requested me, in that case, to get it at least and bring it to him. I couldn't deny him that favour? No, I couldn't, indeed. I went down to the library, therefore, and on entering the room found Theodore standing by the fireplace with a bundle of papers. The secretary was open. I stood still, looking from the violated cabinet to the documents in his hand. Among them I recognised, by its shape and size, the paper of which I had intended to possess myself. Without delay I walked straight up to him. He looked surprised, but not confused. "I am afraid I shall have to trouble you to surrender one of those papers," I said.

"Surrender, Maximus? To anything of your own you are perfectly welcome. I didn't know that you made use of Mr. Sloane's secretary. I was looking for some pages of notes which I have myself made, and in which I conceive I have a property."

"This is what I want, *mon vieux*," I said; and I drew the will, unfolded, from between his hands. As I did so his eyes fell upon the superscription, "Last Will and Testament. March. F. S." He flushed an extraordinary crimson. Our eyes met. Somehow—I don't know how or why, or for that matter why not—I burst into a violent peal of laughter. Theodore stood staring, with two hot, bitter tears in his eyes.

"Of course you think I came to ferret out that thing," he said.

I shrugged my shoulders—those of my body only. I confess, morally, I was on my knees with contrition, but there was a fascination in it—a fatality. I remembered that in the hurry of my movements the other evening I had slipped the will simply into one of the outer drawers of the cabinet, among Theodore's own papers. "Mr. Sloane sent me for it," I said.

"Very good; I am glad to hear he's well enough to think of such things."

"He means to destroy it."

"I hope, then, he has another made."

"Mentally, I suppose he has."

"Unfortunately, his weakness isn't mental—or exclusively so."

"Oh, he will live to make a dozen more!" I exclaimed. "Do you know the purport of this one?"

Theodore's colour by this time had died away into plain white. He shook his head. The doggedness of the movement provoked me, and I wished to excite his curiosity. "I have his commission to destroy it."

Theodore smiled very grandly. "It's not a task I envy you," he remarked.

"I should think not—especially if you knew the import of the will." He stood with folded arms, regarding me with his cold, detached eyes. I couldn't stand it. "Come, it's your property! You are sole legatee. I give it up to you." And I thrust the paper into his hand.

He received it mechanically; but after a pause, bethinking himself, he unfolded it and cast his eyes over the contents. Then he slowly smoothed it

together and held it a moment with a tremulous hand. "You say that Mr. Sloane directed you to destroy it?" he finally inquired.

"I say so."

"And that you know the contents?"

"Exactly."

"And that you were about to do what he asked you?"

"On the contrary, I declined."

Theodore fixed his eyes for a moment on the superscription and then raised them again to my face. "Thank you, Max," he said. "You have left me a real satisfaction." He tore the sheet across and threw the bits into the fire. We stood watching them burn. "Now he can make another," said Theodore.

"Twenty others," I replied.

"No, I have an idea you will take care of that."

"You are very bitter," I said, sharply enough.

"No, I am perfectly indifferent. Farewell!" And he put out his hand.

"Are you going away?"

"Of course I am. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, then. But isn't your departure rather sudden?"

"I ought to have gone three weeks ago—three weeks ago." I had taken his hand, he pulled it away; his voice was trembling—there were tears in it.

"Is *that* indifference?" I asked.

"It's something you will never know!" he cried. "It's shame! I am not sorry you should

see what I feel. It will suggest to you, perhaps, that my heart has never been in this filthy contest. Let me assure you, at any rate, that it hasn't; that it has had nothing but scorn for the base perversion of my pride and my ambition. I could easily shed tears of joy at their return—the return of the prodigals! Tears of sorrow—sorrow——"

He was unable to go on. He sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands.

"For God's sake, stick to the joy!" I exclaimed.

He rose to his feet again. "Well," he said, "it was for your sake that I parted with my self-respect; with your assistance I recover it."

"How for my sake?"

"For whom but you would I have gone so far as I did? For what other purpose than that of keeping our friendship whole would I have borne you company into this narrow pass? A man whom I cared for less I would long since have parted with. You were needed—you and something you have about you that always takes me so—to bring me to this. You ennobled, exalted, enchanted the struggle. I *did* value my prospect of coming into Mr. Sloane's property. I valued it for my poor sisters' sake as well as for my own, so long as it was the natural reward of conscientious service, and not the prize of hypocrisy and cunning. With another man than you I never would have contested such a prize. But you fascinated me, even as my rival. You played with me, deceived me, betrayed me. I held my ground, hoping you would see that what you were doing

was not fair. But if you have seen it, it has made no difference with you. For Mr. Sloane, from the moment that, under your magical influence, he revealed his nasty little nature, I had nothing but contempt."

"And for me now?"

"Don't ask me. I don't trust myself."

"Hate, I suppose."

"Is that the best you can imagine? Farewell!"

"Is it a serious farewell—farewell for ever?"

"How can there be any other?"

"I am sorry this should be your point of view. It's characteristic. All the more reason then that I should say a word in self-defence. You accuse me of having 'played with you, deceived you, betrayed you.' It seems to me that you are quite beside the mark. You say you were such a friend of mine; if so, you ought to be one still. It was not to my fine sentiments you attached yourself, for I never had any or pretended to any. In anything I have done recently, therefore, there has been no inconsistency. I never pretended to take one's friendships so seriously. I don't understand the word in the sense you attach to it. I don't understand the feeling of affection between men. To me it means quite another thing. You give it a meaning of your own; you enjoy the profit of your invention; it's no more than just that you should pay the penalty. Only it seems to me rather hard that *I* should pay it." Theodore remained silent, but he looked quite sick. "Is it still a 'serious farewell'?" I went on. "It seems

a pity. After this clearing-up oughtn't one to be on rather better terms with you? No man can have a deeper appreciation of your excellent parts, a keener enjoyment of your society. I should very much regret the loss of it."

"Have we, then, all this while understood each other so little?" said Theodore.

"Don't say 'we' and 'each other.' I think I have understood you."

"Very likely. It's not for my having kept anything back."

"Well, I do you justice. To me you have always been over-generous. Try now and be just."

Still he stood silent, with his cold, hard frown. It was plain that if he was to come back to me, it would be from the other world—if there be one! What he was going to answer I know not. The door opened, and Robert appeared, pale, trembling, his eyes starting out of his head.

"I verily believe that poor Mr. Sloane is dead in his bed!" he cried.

There was a moment's perfect silence. "Amen," said I. "Yes, old boy, try and be just." Mr. Sloane had quietly died in my absence.

24th.—Theodore went up to town this morning, having shaken hands with me in silence before he started. Doctor Jones, and Brooks the attorney, have been very officious, and by their advice I have telegraphed to a certain Miss Meredith, a maiden-lady, by their account the nearest of kin; or, in other words, simply a discarded niece of the

defunct. She telegraphs back that she will arrive in person for the funeral. I shall remain till she comes. I have lost a fortune, but have I irretrievably lost a friend? I am sure I can't say. Yes, I shall wait for Miss Meredith.

1869.

A DAY OF DAYS.

MR. HERBERT MOORE, a gentleman of the highest note in the scientific world, and a childless widower, finding himself at last unable to reconcile his sedentary habits with the management of a household, had invited his only sister to come and superintend his domestic affairs. Miss Adela Moore had assented the more willingly to his proposal as by her mother's death she had recently been left without a formal protector. She was twenty-five years of age, and was a very active member of what she and her friends called society. She was almost equally at home in the best company of three great cities, and she had encountered most of the adventures which await a young girl on the threshold of life. She had become rather hastily and imprudently engaged, but she had eventually succeeded in disengaging herself. She had spent a summer or two in Europe, and she had made a voyage to Cuba with a dear friend in the last stage of consumption, who had died at the hotel in the Havana. Although by no means perfectly beautiful in person she was yet thoroughly pleasing, rejoicing in what young ladies are fond of calling an *air;* that is, she was tall and slender, with a long neck, a low forehead, and a handsome

nose. Even after six years of the best company, too, she still had excellent manners. She was, moreover, mistress of a very pretty little fortune, and was accounted clever without detriment to her amiability and amiable without detriment to her wit. These facts, as the reader will allow, might have ensured her the very best prospects; but he has seen that she had found herself willing to forfeit her prospects and bury herself in the country. It seemed to her that she had seen enough of the world and of human nature, and that a period of seclusion might yield a fine refreshment. She had begun to suspect that for a girl of her age she was unduly old and wise—and, what is more, to suspect that others suspected as much. A great observer of life and manners, so far as her opportunities went, she conceived that it behoved her to organise the results of her observation into principles of conduct and belief. She was becoming—so she argued—too impersonal, too critical, too intelligent, too contemplative, too just. A woman had no business to be so just. The society of nature, of the great expansive skies and the primeval woods, would check the morbid development of her brain-power. She would spend her time in the fields and merely vegetate; walk and ride, and read the old-fashioned books in Herbert's library.

She found her brother established in a very pretty house, at about a mile's distance from the nearest town, and at about six miles' distance from another town, the seat of a small but ancient college, before which he delivered a weekly lecture.

the woody hills were putting on the morbid colours of autumn; the great pine-grove behind the house seemed to have caught and imprisoned the protesting breezes. Looking down the road toward the village, it occurred to Adela that she might have a visit, and so human was her mood that if any of the local people were to come to her she felt it was in her to humour them. As the sun rose higher she went in and established herself with a piece of embroidery in a deep bow-window, in the second story, which, betwixt its muslin curtains and its external frame-work of high-creeping plants, commanded most insidiously the principal approach to the house. While she drew her threads she surveyed the road with a deepening conviction that she was destined to have a caller. The air was warm, yet not hot; the dust had been laid during the night by a gentle rain. It had been from the first a source of complaint among Adela's new friends that she was equally gracious to all men, and, what was more remarkable, to all women. Not only had she dedicated herself to no friendships, but she had committed herself to no preferences. Nevertheless, it was with an imagination by no means severely impartial that she sat communing with her open casement. She had very soon made up her mind that, to answer the requirements of the hour, her visitor must be of a sex as different as possible from her own; and as, thanks to the few differences in favour of any individual she had been able to discover among the young males of the country-side, her roll-call in this her hour of need was limited to a single

a year ago she had entertained a serious regard, now impressed her as a very flimsy little person, who talked about her lover with almost indecent flippancy.

Meanwhile, September was slowly running its course. One morning Mr. Moore took a hasty breakfast and started to catch the train for Slowfield, whither a scientific conference called him, which might, he said, release him that afternoon in time for dinner at home, or might, on the other hand, detain him till the night. It was almost the first time during the term of Adela's rustication that she had been left alone for several hours. Her brother's quiet presence was inappreciable enough; yet now that he was at a distance she felt a singular sense of freedom: a return of that condition of early childhood when, through some domestic catastrophe, she had for an infinite morning been left to her own devices. What should she do? she asked herself, with the smile that she reserved for her maidenly monologues. It was a good day for work, but it was a still better one for play. Should she drive into town and call on a lot of tiresome local people? Should she go into the kitchen and try her hand at a pudding for dinner? She felt a delectable longing to do something illicit, to play with fire, to discover some Bluebeard's closet. But poor Herbert was no Bluebeard; if she were to burn down his house he would exact no amends. Adela went out to the verandah, and, sitting down on the steps, gazed across the country. It was apparently the last day of summer. The sky was faintly blue;

the woody hills were putting on the morbid colours of autumn ; the great pine-grove behind the house seemed to have caught and imprisoned the protesting breezes. Looking down the road toward the village, it occurred to Adela that she might have a visit, and so human was her mood that if any of the local people were to come to her she felt it was in her to humour them. As the sun rose higher she went in and established herself with a piece of embroidery in a deep bow-window, in the second story, which, betwixt its muslin curtains and its external frame-work of high-creeping plants, commanded most insidiously the principal approach to the house. While she drew her threads she surveyed the road with a deepening conviction that she was destined to have a caller. The air was warm, yet not hot ; the dust had been laid during the night by a gentle rain. It had been from the first a source of complaint among Adela's new friends that she was equally gracious to all men, and, what was more remarkable, to all women. Not only had she dedicated herself to no friendships, but she had committed herself to no preferences. Nevertheless, it was with an imagination by no means severely impartial that she sat communing with her open casement. She had very soon made up her mind that, to answer the requirements of the hour, her visitor must be of a sex as different as possible from her own ; and as, thanks to the few differences in favour of any individual she had been able to discover among the young males of the country-side, her roll-call in this her hour of need was limited to a single

name, so her thoughts were now centred upon the bearer of that name, Mr. Weatherby Pynsent, the Unitarian minister. If instead of being Miss Moore's story this were Mr. Pynsent's, it might easily be condensed into the simple statement that he was very far gone indeed. Although affiliated to a richer ceremonial than his own she had been so well pleased with one of his sermons, to which she had allowed herself to lend a tolerant ear, that, meeting him some time afterward, she had received him with what she considered a rather knotty doctrinal question; whereupon, gracefully waiving the question, he had asked permission to call upon her and talk over her "difficulties." This short interview had enshrined her in the young minister's heart; and the half a dozen occasions on which he had subsequently contrived to see her had each contributed another candle to her altar. It is but fair to add, however, that, although a captive, Mr. Pynsent was as yet no captor. He was simply an honourable young parson, who happened at this moment to be the most sympathetic companion within reach. Adela, at twenty-five years of age, had both a past and a future. Mr. Pynsent reminded her of the one and gave her a foretaste of the other.

So, at last, when, as the morning waned toward noon, Adela descried in the distance a man's figure treading the grassy margin of the road, and swinging his stick as he came, she smiled to herself with some complacency. But even while she smiled she became conscious that her heart was beating quite idiotically. She rose, and, re-

senting her gratuitous emotion, stood for a moment half resolved to see no one at all. As she did so she glanced along the road again. Her friend had drawn nearer, and as the distance lessened she began to perceive that he was not her friend. Before many moments her doubts were removed; the gentleman was a stranger. In front of the house three roads went their different ways, and a spreading elm, tall and slim, like the feathery sheaf of a gleaner, with an ancient bench beneath it, made an informal *rond-point.* The stranger came along the opposite side of the highway, and when he reached the elm stopped and looked about him, as if to verify some direction that had been given him. Then he deliberately crossed over. Adela had time to see, unseen, that he was a robust young man, with a bearded chin and a soft white hat. After the due interval Becky the maid came up with a card somewhat rudely superscribed in pencil:

THOMAS LUDLOW,
New York.

Turning it over in her fingers, Adela saw the gentleman had made use of the reverse of a pasteboard abstracted from the basket on her own drawing-room table. The printed name on the other side was dashed out; it ran: *Mr. Weatherby Pynsent.*

"He asked me to give you this, ma'am," said Becky. "He helped himself to it out of the tray."

"Did he ask for me by name?"

"No, ma'am; he asked for Mr. Moore. When

I told him Mr. Moore was away, he asked for some of the family. I told him you was all the family, ma'am."

"Very well," said Adela, "I will go down." But, begging her pardon, we will precede her by a few steps.

Tom Ludlow, as his friends called him, was a young man of twenty-eight, concerning whom you might have heard the most various opinions; for, as far as he was known (which, indeed, was not very far), he was at once one of the best liked and one of the best hated of men. Born in one of the lower walks of New York life, he still seemed always to move in his native element. A certain crudity of manner and aspect proved him to belong to the great vulgar, muscular, popular majority. On this basis, however, he was a sufficiently good-looking fellow: a middle-sized, agile figure, a head so well shaped as to be handsome, a pair of inquisitive, responsive eyes, and a large, manly mouth, constituting the most expressive part of his equipment. Turned upon the world at an early age, he had, in the pursuit of a subsistence, tried his head at everything in succession, and had generally found it to be quite as hard as the opposing substance; and his person may have been thought to reflect this experience in an air of taking success too much for granted. He was a man of strong faculties and a strong will, but it is doubtful whether his feelings were stronger than he. People liked him for his directness, his good-humour, his general soundness and serviceableness, and disliked him for the same qualities under different

names; that is, for his impudence, his offensive optimism, his inhuman avidity for facts. When his friends insisted upon his noble disinterestedness, his enemies were wont to reply it was all very well to ignore, to suppress, one's own sensibilities in the pursuit of knowledge, but to trample on the rest of mankind at the same time betrayed an excess of zeal. Fortunately for Ludlow, on the whole, he was no great listener, and even if he had been, a certain plebeian thick-skinnedness would always have saved his tenderer parts; although it must be added that, if, like a genuine democrat, he was very insensitive, like a genuine democrat, too, he was unexpectedly proud. His tastes, which had always been for the natural sciences, had recently led him to the study of fossil remains, the branch cultivated by Herbert Moore; and it was upon business connected with this pursuit that, after a short correspondence, he had now come to see him.

As Adela went to him he came out from the window, where he had been looking at the lawn. She acknowledged the friendly nod which he apparently intended for a greeting.

"Miss Moore, I believe," said Ludlow.

"Miss Moore," said Adela.

"I beg your pardon for this intrusion, but as I have come from a distance to see Mr. Moore, on business, I thought I might venture either to ask at head-quarters how he may most easily be reached, or even to give you a message for him." These words were accompanied with a smile under the influence of which it had been written on the scroll of Adela's fate that she was to descend from her pedestal.

"Pray make no apologies," she said. "We hardly recognise such a thing as intrusion in this simple little place. Won't you sit down? My brother went away only this morning, and I expect him back this afternoon."

"This afternoon? indeed. In that case I believe I'll wait. It was very stupid of me not to have dropped a word beforehand. But I have been in the city all summer long, and I shall not be sorry to squeeze a little vacation out of this business. I'm tremendously fond of the country, and I have been working for many months in a musty museum."

"It's possible that my brother may not come home until the evening," Adela said. "He was uncertain. You might go to him at Slowfield."

Ludlow reflected a moment, with his eyes on his hostess. "If he does return in the afternoon, at what hour will he arrive?"

"Well, about three."

"And my own train leaves at four. Allow him a quarter of an hour to come from town and myself a quarter of an hour to get there (if he would give me his vehicle back). In that case I should have about half an hour to see him. We couldn't do much talk, but I could ask him the essential questions. I wish chiefly to ask him for some letters—letters of recommendation to some foreign scientists. He is the only man in this country who knows how much I know. It seems a pity to take two superfluous—that is, possibly superfluous—railway-journeys, of an hour apiece; for I should probably come back

with him. Don't you think so?" he asked, very frankly.

"You know best," said Adela. "I am not particularly fond of the journey to Slowfield, even when it's absolutely necessary."

"Yes; and then this is such a lovely day for a good long ramble in the fields. That's a thing I haven't had since I don't know when. I guess I'll remain." And he placed his hat on the floor beside him.

"I am afraid, now that I think of it," said Adela, "that there is no train until so late an hour that you would have very little time left on your arrival to talk with my brother, before the hour at which he himself might have determined to start for home. It's true that you might induce him to stop over till the evening."

"Dear me! I shouldn't want to do that. It might be very inconvenient for Mr. Moore, don't you see? Besides, I shouldn't have time. And then I always like to see a man in his home—or at some place of my own; a man, that is, whom I have any regard for—and I have a very great regard for your brother, Miss Moore. When men meet at a half-way house neither feels at his ease. And then this is such an attractive country residence of yours," pursued Ludlow, looking about him.

"Yes, it's a very pretty place," said Adela.

Ludlow got up and walked to the window. "I want to look at your view," he remarked. "A lovely little spot. You are a happy woman, Miss Moore, to have the beauties of nature always before your eyes."

"Yes, if pretty scenery can make one happy, I ought to be happy." And Adela was glad to regain her feet and stand on the other side of the table, before the window.

"Don't you think it can?" asked Ludlow, turning round. "I don't know, though; perhaps it can't. Ugly sights can't make you unhappy, necessarily. I have been working for a year in one of the narrowest, darkest, dirtiest, busiest streets in New York, with rusty bricks and muddy gutters for scenery. But I think I can hardly set up to be miserable. I wish I could! It might be a claim on your benevolence." As he said these words he stood leaning against the window-shutter, outside the curtain, with folded arms. The morning light covered his face, and, mingled with that of his radiant laugh, showed Adela that his was a nature very much alive.

"Whatever else he may be," she said to herself, as she stood within the shade of the other curtain, playing with the paper-knife, which she had plucked from the table, "I think he is honest. I am afraid he isn't a gentleman—but he isn't a bore." She met his eye, freely, for a moment. "What do you want of my benevolence?" she asked, with an abruptness of which she was perfectly conscious. "Does he wish to make friends," she pursued, tacitly, "or does he merely wish to pay me a vulgar compliment? There is bad taste, perhaps, in either case, but especially in the latter." Meanwhile her visitor had already answered her.

"What do I want of your benevolence? Why, what does one want of any pleasant thing in life?"

"Dear me, if you never have anything pleasanter than that!" our heroine exclaimed.

"It will do very well for the present occasion," said the young man, blushing, in a large masculine way, at his own quickness of repartee.

Adela glanced toward the clock on the chimney-piece. She was curious to measure the duration of her acquaintance with this breezy invader of her privacy, with whom she so suddenly found herself bandying jokes so personal. She had known him some eight minutes.

Ludlow observed her movement. "I am interrupting you and detaining you from your own affairs," he said; and he moved toward his hat. "I suppose I must bid you good-morning." And he picked it up.

Adela stood at the table and watched him cross the room. To express a very delicate feeling in terms comparatively crude, she was loth to see him depart. She divined, too, that he was very sorry to go. The knowledge of this feeling on his side, however, affected her composure but slightly. The truth is—we say it with all respect—Adela was an old hand. She was modest, honest and wise; but, as we have said, she had a past—a past of which importunate swains in the guise of morning-callers had been no inconsiderable part; and a great dexterity in what may be called outflanking these gentlemen was one of her registered accomplishments. Her liveliest emotion at present, therefore, was less one of annoyance at her companion than of surprise at her own mansuetude, which was yet undeniable.

"Am I dreaming?" she asked herself. She looked out of the window, and then back at Ludlow, who stood grasping his hat and stick, contemplating her face. Should she give him leave to remain? "He is honest," she repeated; "why should not I be honest for once? I am sorry you are in a hurry," she said, aloud.

"I am in no hurry," he answered.

Adela turned her face to the window again, and toward the opposite hills. There was a moment's pause.

"I thought *you* were in a hurry," said Ludlow.

Adela shifted her eyes back to where they could see him. "My brother would be very glad that you should stay as long as you like. He would expect me to offer you what little hospitality is in my power."

"Pray, offer it then."

"That is very easily done. This is the parlour, and there, beyond the hall, is my brother's study. Perhaps you would like to look at his books and collections. I know nothing about them, and I should be a very poor guide. But you are welcome to go in and use your discretion in examining what may interest you."

"This, I take it, would be but another way of separating from you."

"For the present, yes."

"But I hesitate to take such liberties with your brother's things as you recommend."

"Recommend? I recommend nothing."

"But if I decline to penetrate into Mr. Moore's sanctum, what alternative remains?"

"Really—you must make your own alternative."

"I think you mentioned the parlour. Suppose I choose that."

"Just as you please. Here are some books, and if you like I will bring you some periodicals. There are ever so many scientific papers. Can I serve you in any other way? Are you tired by your walk? Would you like a glass of wine?"

"Tired by my walk?—not exactly. You are very kind, but I feel no immediate desire for a glass of wine. I think you needn't trouble yourself about the scientific periodicals either. I am not exactly in the mood to read." And Ludlow pulled out his watch and compared it with the clock. "I am afraid your clock is fast."

"Yes," said Adela; "very likely."

"Some ten minutes. Well, I suppose I had better be walking." And, coming toward Adela, he extended his hand.

She gave him hers. "It is a day of days for a long, slow ramble," she said.

Ludlow's only rejoinder was his hand-shake. He moved slowly toward the door, half accompanied by Adela. "Poor fellow!" she said to herself. There was a summer-door, composed of lattices painted green, like a shutter; it admitted into the hall a cool, dusky light, in which Adela looked pale. Ludlow pushed its wings apart with his stick, and disclosed a landscape, long, deep, and bright, framed by the pillars of the porch. He stopped on the threshold, swinging his cane. "I hope I shall not lose my way," he said.

"I hope not. My brother will not forgive me if you do."

Ludlow's brows were slightly contracted by a frown, but he contrived to smile with his lips. "When shall I come back?" he asked, abruptly.

Adela found but a low tone—almost a whisper—at her command to answer—"Whenever you please."

The young man turned round, with his back to the bright doorway, and looked into Adela's face, which was now covered with light. "Miss Moore," said he, "it's very much against my will that I leave you at all!"

Adela stood debating within herself. After all, what if her companion should stay with her? It would, under the circumstances, be an adventure; but was an adventure necessarily a criminal thing? It lay wholly with herself to decide. She was her own mistress, and she had hitherto been a just mistress. Might she not for once be a generous one? The reader will observe in Adela's meditation the recurrence of this saving clause "for once." It was produced by the simple fact that she had begun the day in a romantic mood. She was prepared to be interested; and now that an interesting phenomenon had presented itself, that it stood before her in vivid human—nay, manly—shape, instinct with reciprocity, was she to close her hand to the liberality of fate? To do so would be only to expose herself the more, for it would imply a gratuitous insult to human nature. Was not the man before her redolent of good intentions, and was that not enough? He was not

what Adela had been used to call a gentleman; at this conviction she had arrived by a rapid diagonal, and now it served as a fresh starting-point. "I have seen all the gentlemen can show me" (this was her syllogism): "let us try something new! I see no reason why you should run away so fast, Mr. Ludlow," she said, aloud.

"I think it would be the greatest piece of folly I ever committed!" cried the young man.

"I think it would be rather a pity," Adela remarked.

"And you invite me into your parlour again? I come as *your* visitor, you know. I was your brother's before. It's a simple enough matter. We are old friends. We have a solid common ground in your brother. Isn't that about it?"

"You may adopt whatever theory you please. To my mind it is indeed a very simple matter."

"Oh, but I wouldn't have it too simple," said Ludlow, with a genial smile.

"Have it as you please!"

Ludlow leaned back against the doorway. "Look here, Miss Moore; your kindness makes me as gentle as a little child. I am passive; I am in your hands; do with me what you please. I can't help contrasting my fate with what it might have been but for you. A quarter of an hour ago I was ignorant of your existence; you were not in my programme. I had no idea your brother had a sister. When your servant spoke of 'Miss Moore,' upon my word I expected something rather elderly—something venerable—some rigid old lady, who would say, 'exactly,' and 'very well, sir,' and leave

me to spend the rest of the morning tilting back in a chair on the piazza of the hotel. It shows what fools we are to attempt to forecast the future."

"We must not let our imagination run away with us in any direction," said Adela, sententiously.

"Imagination? I don't believe I have any. No, madam"—and Ludlow straightened himself up—"I live in the present. I write my programme from hour to hour—or, at any rate, I will in the future."

"I think you are very wise," said Adela. "Suppose you write a programme for the present hour. What shall we do? It seems to me a pity to spend so lovely a morning in-doors. There is something in the air—I can't imagine what—which seems to say it is the last day of summer. We ought to commemorate it. How should you like to take a walk?" Adela had decided that, to reconcile her aforesaid benevolence with the proper maintenance of her dignity, her only course was to be the perfect hostess. This decision made, very naturally and gracefully she played her part. It was the one possible part; and yet it did not preclude those delicate sensations with which so rare an episode seem charged: it simply legitimated them. A romantic adventure on so conventional a basis would assuredly hurt no one.

"I should like a walk very much," said Ludlow; "a walk with a halt at the end of it."

"Well, if you will consent to a short halt at the beginning of it," Adela rejoined, "I will be with you in a very few minutes." When she returned, in her little hat and jacket, she found her friend

seated on the steps of the verandah. He arose and gave her a card.

"I have been requested, in your absence, to hand you this."

Adela read with some compunction the name of Mr. Weatherby Pynsent.

"Has he been here?" she asked. "Why didn't he come in?"

"I told him you were not at home. If it wasn't true then, it was going to be true so soon that the interval was hardly worth taking account of. He addressed himself to me, as I seemed from my position to be quite in possession; that is, I put myself in his way, as it were, so that he had to speak to me: but I confess he looked at me as if he doubted my word. He hesitated as to whether he should confide his name to me, or whether he should ring for the servant. I think he wished to show me that he suspected my veracity, for he was making rather grimly for the door-bell when I, fearing that once inside the house he might encounter the living truth, informed him in the most good-humoured tone possible that I would take charge of his little tribute, if he would trust me with it."

"It seems to me, Mr. Ludlow, that you are a strangely unscrupulous man. How did you know that Mr. Pynsent's business was not urgent?"

"I didn't know it! But I knew it could be no more urgent than mine. Depend upon it, Miss Moore, you have no case against me. I only pretend to be a man; to have admitted that sweet

little cleric—isn't he a cleric, eh?—would have been the act of an angel."

Adela was familiar with a sequestered spot, in the very heart of the fields, as it seemed to her, to which she now proposed to conduct her friend. The point was to select a goal neither too distant nor too near, and to adopt a pace neither too rapid nor too slow. But, although Adela's happy valley was at least two miles away, and they had dawdled immensely over the interval, yet their arrival at a certain little rustic gate, beyond which the country grew vague and gently wild, struck Adela as sudden. Once on the road she felt a precipitate conviction that there could be no evil in an excursion so purely pastoral and no guile in a spirit so deeply sensitive to the influences of nature, and to the melancholy aspect of incipient autumn, as that of her companion. A man with an unaffected relish for small children is a man to inspire young women with a confidence; and so, in a less degree, a man with a genuine feeling for the unsophisticated beauties of a casual New England landscape may not unreasonably be regarded by the daughters of the scene as a person whose motives are pure. Adela was a great observer of the clouds, the trees, and the streams, the sounds and colours, the transparent airs and blue horizons of her adopted home; and she was reassured by Ludlow's appreciation of these modest phenomena. His enjoyment of them, deep as it was, however, had to struggle against the sensuous depression natural to a man who has spent the summer looking over dry specimens in a laboratory, and against an

impediment of a less material order—the feeling that Adela was a remarkably attractive woman. Still, naturally a great talker, he uttered his various satisfactions with abundant humour and point. Adela felt that he was decidedly a companion for the open air—he was a man to make use, even to abuse, of the wide horizon and the high ceiling of nature. The freedom of his gestures, the sonority of his voice, the keenness of his vision, the general vivacity of his manners, seemed to necessitate and to justify a universal absence of resisting surfaces. They passed through the little gate and wandered over empty pastures, until the ground began to rise, and stony surfaces to crop through the turf; when, after a short ascent, they reached a broad plateau, covered with boulders and shrubs, which lost itself on one side in a short, steep cliff, whence fields and marshes stretched down to the opposite river, and on the other, in scattered clumps of cedar and maple, which gradually thickened and multiplied, until the horizon in that quarter was purple with mild masses of forest. Here was both sun and shade—the unobstructed sky, or the whispering dome of a circle of trees which had always reminded Adela of the stone-pines of the Villa Borghese. Adela led the way to a sunny seat among the rocks which commanded the course of the river, where the murmuring cedars would give them a kind of human company.

"It has always seemed to me that the wind in the trees is always the voice of coming changes," Ludlow said.

"Perhaps it is," Adela replied. "The trees are for ever talking in this melancholy way, and men are for ever changing."

"Yes, but they can only be said to express the foreboding of coming events—that is what I mean—when there is some one there to hear them; and more especially some one in whose life a change is, to his knowledge, about to take place. Then they are quite prophetic. Don't you know Longfellow says so?"

"Yes, I know Longfellow says so. But you seem to speak from your own inspiration."

"Well, I rather think I do."

"Is there some great change hanging over you?"

"Yes, rather an important one."

"I believe that's what men say when they are going to be married," said Adela.

"I am going to be divorced, rather. I am going to Europe."

"Indeed! soon?"

"To-morrow," said Ludlow, after an instant's pause.

"Oh!" exclaimed Adela. "How I envy you!"

Ludlow, who sat looking over the cliff and tossing stones down into the plain, observed a certain inequality in the tone of his companion's two exclamations. The first was nature, the second art. He turned his eyes upon her, but she had directed hers away into the distance. Then, for a moment, he retreated within himself and thought. He rapidly surveyed his position. Here was he, Tom Ludlow, a hard-headed son of toil; without fortune, without credit, without an-

tecedents, whose lot was cast exclusively with vulgar males, and who had never had a mother, a sister, nor a well-bred sweetheart, to pitch his voice for the feminine tympanum, who had seldom come nearer an indubitable lady than, in a favouring crowd, to receive a mechanical "thank you" (as if he were a policeman) for some accidental assistance: here he found himself up to his neck in a sudden pastoral with a young woman who was evidently altogether superior. That it was in him to enjoy the society of such a person (provided, of course, she were not a chit) he very well knew; but he had never happened to suppose that he should find it open to him. Was he now to infer that this brilliant gift was his—the gift of what is called in the relation between the sexes success? The inference was at least logical. He had made a good impression. Why else should an eminently discriminating girl have fraternised with him at such a rate? It was with a little thrill of satisfaction that Ludlow reflected upon the directness of his course. "It all comes back to my old theory that a process can't be too simple. I used no arts. In such an enterprise I shouldn't have known where to begin. It was my ignorance of the regular way that saved me. Women like a gentleman, of course; but they like a man better." It was the little touch of nature he had detected in Adela's tone that set him thinking; but as compared with the frankness of his own attitude it betrayed after all no undue emotion. Ludlow had accepted the fact of his adaptability to the idle mood of a

cultivated woman in a thoroughly rational spirit, and he was not now tempted to exaggerate its bearings. He was not the man to be intoxicated by a triumph after all possibly superficial. "If Miss Moore is so wise—or so foolish—as to like me half an hour for what I am, she is welcome," he said to himself. "Assuredly," he added, as he glanced at her intelligent profile, "she will not like me for what I am not." It needs a woman, however, far more intelligent than (thank heaven!) most women are—more intelligent, certainly, than Adela was—to guard her happiness against a clever man's consistent assumption of her intelligence; and doubtless it was from a sense of this general truth that, as Ludlow continued to observe his companion, he felt an emotion of manly tenderness. "I wouldn't offend her for the world," he thought. Just then Adela, conscious of his contemplation, looked about; and before he knew it, Ludlow had repeated aloud, "Miss Moore, I wouldn't offend you for the world."

Adela eyed him for a moment with a little flush that subsided into a smile. "To what dreadful impertinence is that the prelude?" she inquired.

"It's the prelude to nothing. It refers to the past—to any possible displeasure I may have caused you."

"Your scruples are unnecessary, Mr. Ludlow. If you had given me offence, I should not have left you to apologise for it. I should not have left the matter to occur to you as you sat dreaming charitably in the sun."

"What would you have done?"

"Done? nothing. You don't imagine I would have scolded you—or snubbed you—or answered you back, I take it. I would have left undone—what, I can't tell you. Ask yourself what I *have* done. I am sure I hardly know myself," said Adela, with some intensity. "At all events, here I am sitting with you in the fields, as if you were a friend of many years. Why do you speak of offence?" And Adela (an uncommon accident with her) lost command of her voice, which trembled ever so slightly. "What an odd thought! why should you offend me? Do I seem so open to that sort of thing?" Her colour had deepened again, and her eyes had brightened. She had forgotten herself, and before speaking had not, as was her wont, sought counsel of that staunch conservative, her taste. She had spoken from a full heart—a heart which had been filling rapidly, since the outset of their walk, with a feeling almost passionate in its quality, and which that little puff of the actual conveyed in Mr. Ludlow's announcement of his departure had caused to overflow. The reader may give this feeling whatever name he chooses. We will content ourselves with saying that Adela had played with fire so effectually that she had been scorched. The slight violence of the speech just quoted may represent her sensation of pain.

"You pull one up rather short, Miss Moore," said Ludlow. "A man says the best he can."

Adela made no reply—for a moment she hung her head. Was she to cry out because she

was hurt? Was she to thrust her injured heart into a company in which there was, as yet at least, no question of hearts? No! here our reserved and contemplative heroine is herself again. Her part was still to be the youthful woman of the world, the perfect young lady. For our own part, we can imagine no figure more engaging than this civilised and disciplined personage under such circumstances; and if Adela had been the most accomplished of coquettes she could not have assumed a more becoming expression than the air of judicious consideration which now covered her features. But having paid this generous homage to propriety, she felt free to suffer in secret. Raising her eyes from the ground, she abruptly addressed her companion.

"By the way, Mr. Ludlow, tell me something about yourself."

Ludlow burst into a laugh. "What shall I tell you?"

"Everything."

"Everything? Excuse me, I'm not such a fool. But do you know that's a very tempting request you make? I suppose I ought to blush and hesitate; but I never yet blushed or hesitated in the right place."

"Very good. There is one fact. Continue. Begin at the beginning."

"Well, let me see. My name you know. I am twenty-eight years old."

"That's the end," said Adela.

"But you don't want the history of my babyhood, I take it. I imagine that I was a very big,

noisy, ugly baby—what's called a 'splendid infant.' My parents were poor, and, of course, honest They belonged to a very different set—or 's e I suppose you call it—from any you pro y know. They were working people. My father was a chemist, in a small way of business, and I suspect my mother was not above using her hands to turn a penny. But although I don't remember her, I am sure she was a good, sound woman; I feel her occasionally in my own sinews. I myself have been at work all my life, and a very good worker I am, let me tell you. I am not patient, as I imagine your brother to be—although I have more patience than you might suppose—but I don't let go easily. If I strike you as very egotistical, remember 'twas you began it. I don't know whether I am clever, and I don't much care; that's a kind of metaphysical, sentimental, vapid word. But I know what I want to know, and I generally manage to find it out. I don't know much about my moral nature; I have no doubt I am beastly selfish. Still, I don't like to hurt peoples' feelings, and I am rather fond of poetry and flowers. I don't believe I am very 'high-toned,' all the same. I should not be at all surprised to discover I was prodigiously conceited; but I am afraid the discovery wouldn't cut me down much. I am remarkably hard to keep down, I know. Oh, you would think me a great brute if you knew me. I shouldn't recommend any one to count too much on my being of an amiable disposition. I am often very much bored with people who are fond of me—because some

of them are, really; so I am afraid I am ungrateful. Of course, as a man speaking to a woman, there's nothing for it but to say I am very low; but I hate to talk about things you can't prove. I have got very little "general culture," you know, but first and last I have read a great many books —and, thank heaven, I remember things. And I have some tastes, too. I am very fond of music. I have a good young voice of my own; *that* I can't help knowing; and I am not one to be bullied about pictures. I know how to sit on a horse, and how to row a boat. Is that enough? I am conscious of a great inability to say anything to the point. To put myself in a nutshell, I am a greedy specialist—and not a bad fellow. Still, I am only what I am—a very common creature."

"Do you call yourself a very common creature because you really believe yourself to be one, or because you are weakly tempted to disfigure your rather flattering catalogue with a great final blot?"

"I am sure I don't know. You show more subtlety in that one question than I have shown in a whole string of affirmations. You women are strong on asking embarrassing questions. Seriously, I believe I *am* second-rate. I wouldn't make such an admission to every one though. But to you, Miss Moore, who sit there under your parasol as impartial as the muse of history, to you I owe the truth. I am no man of genius. There is something I miss; some final distinction I lack; you may call it what you please. Perhaps it's

humility. Perhaps you can find it in Ruskin, somewhere. Perhaps it's delicacy—perhaps it's imagination. I am very vulgar, Miss Moore. I am the vulgar son of vulgar people. I use the word, of course, in its literal sense. So much I grant you at the outset, but it's my last concession!"

"Your concessions are smaller than they sound. Have you any sisters?"

"Not a sister; and no brothers, nor cousins nor uncles, nor aunts."

"And you sail for Europe to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, at ten o'clock."

"To be away how long?"

"As long as I can. Five years, if possib "

"What do you expect to do in tho years?"

"Well, study."

"Nothing but study?"

"It will all come back to that, I guess. I h to enjoy myself considerably, and to look at world as I go. But I must not waste time; I growing old."

"Where are you going?"

"To Berlin. I wanted to get some letters introduction from your brother."

"Have you money? Are you well off?"

"Well off? Not I, heaven forgive me! I very poor. I have in hand a little money t has just come to me from an unexpected quarter an old debt owing my father. It will take to Germany and keep me for six months. At that I shall work my way."

"Are you happy? Are you contented?"

"Just now I am pretty comfortable, thank you."

"But shall you be so when you get to Berlin?"

"I don't promise to be contented; but I am pretty sure to be happy."

"Well," said Adela, "I sincerely hope you will succeed in everything."

"Thank you, awfully," said Ludlow.

Of what more was said at this moment no record may be given here. The reader has been put into possession of the key of our friends' conversation; it is only needful to say that in this key it was prolonged for half an hour more. As the minutes elapsed Adela found herself drifting further and further away from her anchorage. When at last she compelled herself to consult her watch and remind her companion that there remained but just time enough for them to reach home in anticipation of her brother's arrival, she knew that she was rapidly floating seaward. As she descended the hill at her companion's side she felt herself suddenly thrilled by an acute temptation. Her first instinct was to close her eyes upon it, in the trust that when she should open them again it would have vanished; but she found that it was not to be so uncompromisingly dismissed. It pressed her so hard that before she walked a mile homeward she had succumbed to it, or had at least given it the pledge of that quickening of the heart which accompanies a bold resolution. This little sacrifice allowed her no breath for idle words, and she accordingly advanced

with a bent and listening head. Ludlow marched along, with no apparent diminution of his hal buoyancy of mien, talking as fast and as k as at the outset. He risked a prophecy that Mr. Moore would not have returned, and charged Adela with a comical message of regrets. Adela had begun by wondering whether the approach of their separation had wrought within him any sentimental depression at all commensurate with her own, with that which sealed her lips and weighed upon her heart; and now she was debating as to whether his express declaration that felt "awfully blue" ought necessarily to remove her doubts. Ludlow followed up this declaration with a very pretty review of the morning, and a leave-taking speech which, whether intensely sincere or not, struck Adela as at least in very good taste. He might be a common creature—but he was certainly a very uncommon one. When they reached the garden-gate it was with a fluttering heart that Adela scanned the premises for some accidental sign of her brother's presence. She felt that there would be an especial fitness in his not having returned. She led the way in. The hall table was bare of his usual hat and overcoat, his silver-headed stick was not in the corner. The only object that struck her was Mr. Pynsent's card, which she had deposited there on her exit. All that was represented by that little white ticket seemed a thousand miles away. She looked for Mr. Moore in his study, but it was empty.

As Adela went back from her quest into the

drawing-room she simply shook her head at Ludlow, who was standing before the fire-place; and as she did so she caught her reflection in the mantel-glass. "Verily," she said to herself, "I have travelled far." She had pretty well unlearned her old dignities and forms, but she was to break with them still more completely. It was with a singular hardihood that she prepared to redeem the little pledge which had been extorted from her on her way home. She felt that there was no trial to which her generosity might now be called which she would not hail with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, her generosity was not likely to be challenged; although she nevertheless had the satisfaction of assuring herself at this moment that, like the mercy of the Lord, it was infinite. Should she satisfy herself of her friend's? or should she leave it delightfully uncertain? These had been the terms of what has been called her temptation, at the foot of the hill.

"Well, I have very little time," said Ludlow; "I must get my dinner and pay my bill and drive to the train." And he put out his hand.

Adela gave him her own, without meeting his eyes. "You are in a great hurry," she said, rather casually.

"It's not I who am in a hurry. It's my confounded destiny. It's the train and the steamer."

"If you really wished to stay you wouldn't be bullied by the train and the steamer."

"Very true—very true. But *do* I really wish to stay?"

"That's the question. That's exactly what I want to know."

"You ask difficult questions, Miss Moore."

"Difficult for me—yes."

"Then, of course, you are prepared to answer easy ones."

"Let me hear what you call easy."

"Well then, do you wish me to stay? All I have to do is to throw down my hat, sit down, and fold my arms for twenty minutes. I lose my train and my ship. I remain in America, instead of going to Europe."

"I have thought of all that."

"I don't mean to say it's a great deal. There are attractions on both sides."

"Yes, and especially on one. It *is* a great deal."

"And you request me to give it up—to renounce Berlin?"

"No; I ought not to do that. What I ask of you is whether, if I *should* so request you, you would say 'yes.'"

"That *does* make the matter easy for you, Miss Moore. What attractions do you hold out?"

"I hold out nothing whatever, sir."

"I suppose that means a great deal."

"A great deal of absurdity."

"Well, you are certainly a most interesting woman, Miss Moore—a charming woman."

"Why don't you call me irresistible at once, and bid me good morning?"

"I don't know but that I shall have to come to

that. But I will give you no answer that leaves you at an advantage. Ask me to stay—order me to stay, if that suits you better—and I will see how it sounds. Come, you must not trifle with a man." He still held Adela's hand, and now they were looking watchfully into each other's eyes. He paused, waiting for an answer.

"Good-bye, Mr. Ludlow," said Adela. "God bless you!" And she was about to withdraw her hand; but he held it.

"Are we friends?" said he.

Adela gave a little shrug of her shoulders. "Friends of three hours!"

Ludlow looked at her with some sternness. "Our parting could at best hardly have been sweet," said he; "but why should you make it bitter, Miss Moore?"

"If it's bitter, why should you try to change it?"

"Because I don't like bitter things."

Ludlow had caught a glimpse of the truth—that truth of which the reader has had a glimpse—and he stood there at once thrilled and annoyed. He had both a heart and a conscience. "It's not my fault," he murmured to the latter; but he was unable to add, in all consistency, that it was his misfortune. It would be very heroic, very poetic, very chivalric, to lose his steamer, and he felt that he could do so for sufficient cause—at the suggestion of a fact. But the motive here was less than a fact—an idea; less than an idea—a mere guess. "It's a very pretty little romance as it is," he said to himself. "Why spoil it? She's a different

sort from any I have met, and just to ha
her like this—that is enough for me!" He ra
her hand to his lips, pressed them to it, dro
it, reached the door, and bounded out of t
garden-gate.

1866.

END OF VOL. I.

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